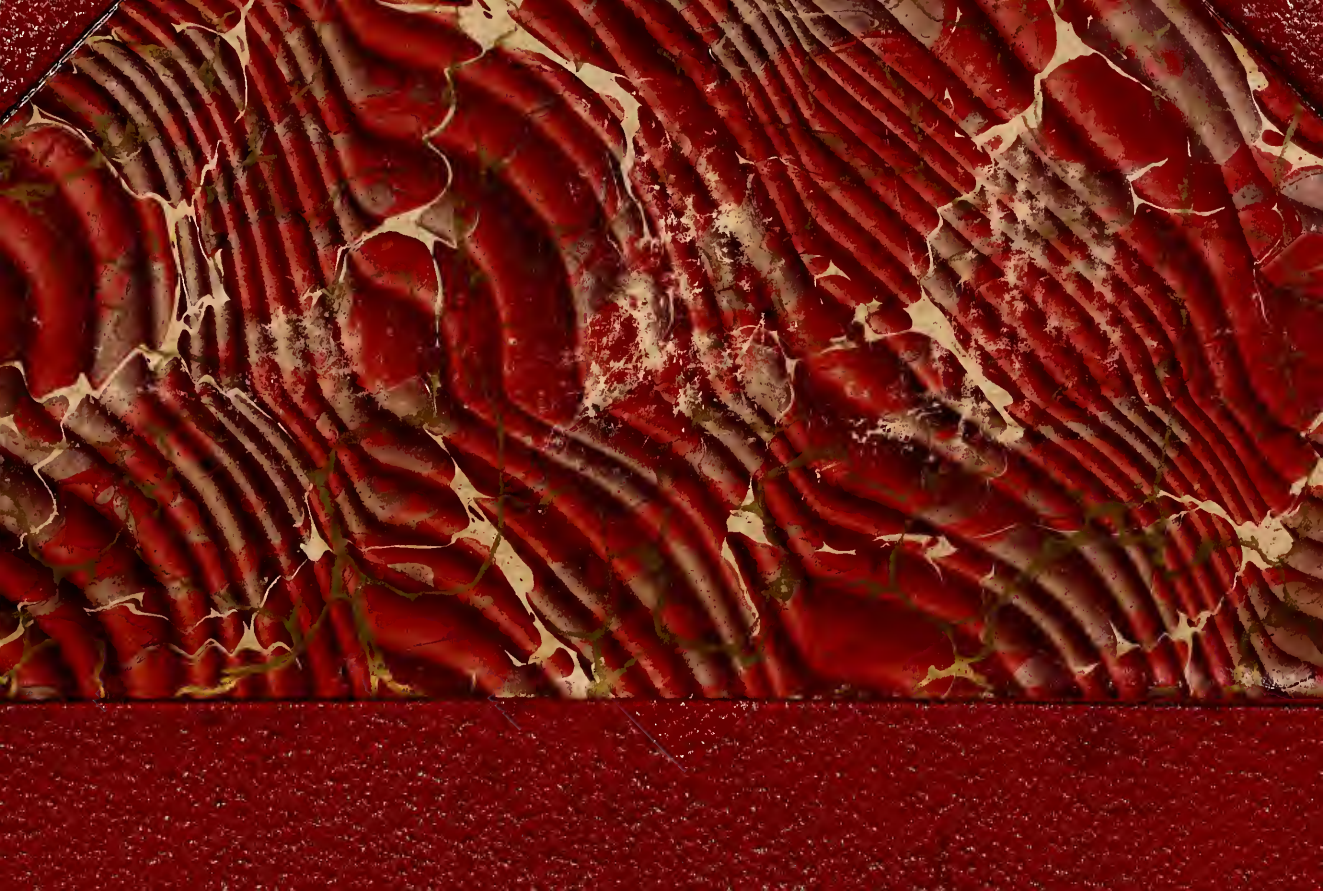

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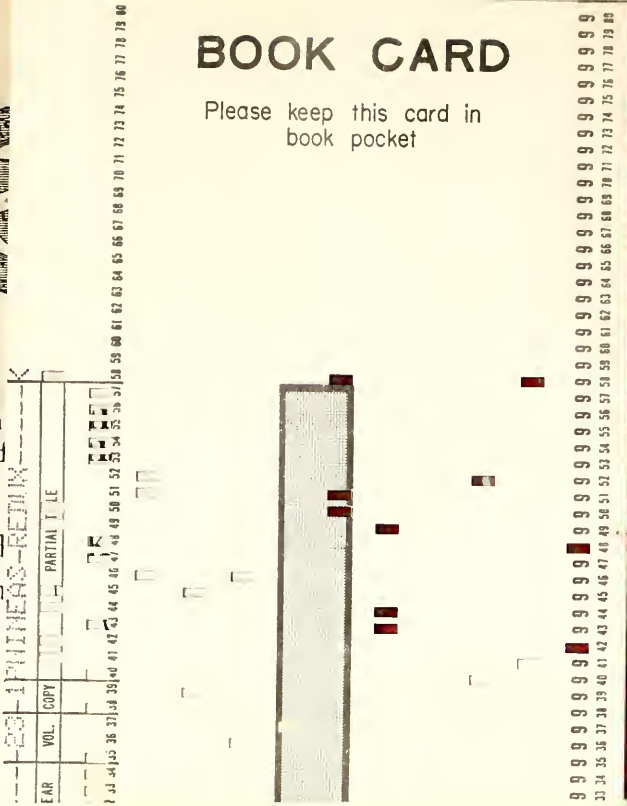

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THE WRITINGS

OF

ANTHONY TROLLOPE

Volume XXIII.

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No. 126

C.R.CRAIG.

PHINEAS REDUX

BY

ANTHONY TROLLOPE

VOLUME II.

"*So the poor old man has gone at last.*" — Page 18.

PHILADELPHIA
GEBBIE AND COMPANY
1900

PHINEAS REDUX

BY

ANTHONY TROLLOPE

VOLUME II.

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PHINEAS REDUX.

CHAPTER I.

THE FIRST THUNDERBOLT.

It was not till after Mr. Slide had left him that Phineas wrote the following letter to Lady Laura:—

"House of Commons, 1st March, 18—.

"My dear Friend,—I have a long story to tell, which I fear I shall find difficult in the telling; but it is so necessary that you should know the facts that I must go through with it as best I may. It will give you very great pain; but the result as regards your own position will not, I think, be injurious to you.

"Yesterday, Sunday, a man came to me who edits a newspaper, and whom I once knew. You will remember when I used to tell you in Portman Square of the amenities and angers of Mr. Slide,—the man who wanted to sit for Loughton. He is the editor. He brought me a long letter from Mr. Kennedy himself, intended for publication, and which was already printed, giving an elaborate and, I may say, a most cruelly untrue account of your quarrel. I read the letter, but of course cannot remember the words. Nor if I could remember them should I repeat them. They contained

all the old charges with which you are familiar, and which your unfortunate husband now desired to publish in consummation of his threats. Why Mr. Slide should have brought me the paper before publishing it I can hardly understand. But he did so; and told me that Mr. Kennedy was in town. We have managed among us to obtain a legal warrant for preventing the publication of the letter, and I think I may say that it will not see the light.

"When Mr. Slide left me I called on Mr. Kennedy, whom I found in a miserable little hotel, in Judd Street, kept by Scotch people named Macpherson. They had come from the neighbourhood of Loughlinter, and knew Mr. Kennedy well. This was yesterday afternoon, Sunday, and I found some difficulty in making my way into his presence. My object was to induce him to withdraw the letter;—for at that time I doubted whether the law could interfere quickly enough to prevent the publication.

"I found your husband in a very sad condition. What he said or what I said I forget; but he was as usual intensely anxious that you should return to him. I need not hesitate now to say that he is certainly mad. After a while, when I expressed my assured opinion that you would not go back to Loughlinter, he suddenly turned round, grasped a revolver, and fired at my head. How I got out of the room I don't quite remember. Had he repeated the shot, which he might have done over and over again, he must have hit me. As it was, I escaped and blundered down the stairs to Mrs. Macpherson's room.

"They whom I have consulted in the matter, namely, Barrington Erle and my particular friend, Mr. Low,—

to whom I went for legal assistance in stopping the publication,—seem to think that I should have at once sent for the police, and given Mr. Kennedy in charge. But I did not do so, and hitherto the police have, I believe, no knowledge of what occurred. A paragraph appeared in one of the morning papers to-day, giving almost an accurate account of the matter, but mentioning neither the place nor any of the names. No doubt it will be repeated in all the papers, and the names will soon be known. But the result will be simply a general conviction as to the insanity of poor Mr. Kennedy,—as to which they who know him have had for a long time but little doubt.

"The Macphersons seem to have been very anxious to screen their guest. At any other hotel no doubt the landlord would have sent for the police;—but in this case the attempt was kept quite secret. They did send for George Kennedy, a cousin of your husband's, whom I think you know, and whom I saw this morning. He assures me that Robert Kennedy is quite aware of the wickedness of the attempt he made, and that he is plunged in deep remorse. He is to be taken down to Loughlinter to-morrow, and is,—so says his cousin,—as tractable as a child. What George Kennedy means to do, I cannot say; but for myself, as I did not send for the police at the moment, as I am told I ought to have done, I shall now do nothing. I don't know that a man is subject to punishment because he does not make complaint. I suppose I have a right to regard it all as an accident if I please.

"But for you this must be very important. That Mr. Kennedy is insane there cannot now, I think, be a doubt; and therefore the question of your returning

to him, as far as there has been any question,—is absolutely settled. None of your friends would be justified in allowing you to return. He is undoubtedly mad, and has done an act which is not murderous only on that conclusion. This settles the question so perfectly that you could, no doubt, reside in England now without danger. Mr. Kennedy himself would feel that he could take no steps to enforce your return after what he did yesterday. Indeed, if you could bring yourself to face the publicity, you could, I imagine, obtain a legal separation which would give you again the control of your own fortune. I feel myself bound to mention this; but I give you no advice. You will no doubt explain all the circumstances to your father.

"I think I have now told you everything that I need tell you. The thing only happened yesterday, and I have been all the morning busy, getting the injunction, and seeing Mr. George Kennedy. Just before I began this letter that horrible editor was with me again, threatening me with all the penalties which an editor can inflict. To tell the truth, I do feel confused among them all, and still fancy that I hear the click of the pistol. That newspaper paragraph says that the ball went through my whiskers, which was certainly not the case;—but a foot or two off is quite near enough for a pistol ball.

"The Duke of Omnium is dying, and I have heard to-day that Madame Goesler, our old friend, has been sent for to Matching. She and I renewed our acquaintance the other day at Harrington.

"God bless you.

"Your most sincere friend,

"PHINEAS FINN.

"Do not let my news oppress you. The firing of the pistol is a thing done and over without evil results. The state of Mr. Kennedy's mind is what we have long suspected; and, melancholy though it be, should contain for you at any rate this consolation,—that the accusations made against you would not have been made had his mind been unclouded."

Twice while Finn was writing this letter was he rung into the House for a division, and once it was suggested to him to say a few words of angry opposition to the Government on some not important subject under discussion. Since the beginning of the session hardly a night had passed without some verbal sparring, and very frequently the limits of parliamentary decorum had been almost surpassed. Never within the memory of living politicians had political rancour been so sharp, and the feeling of injury so keen, both on the one side and on the other. The taunts thrown at the conservatives, in reference to the Church, had been almost unendurable,—and the more so because the strong expressions of feeling from their own party throughout the country were against them. Their own convictions also were against them. And there had for a while been almost a determination through the party to deny their leader and disclaim the bill. But a feeling of duty to the party had prevailed, and this had not been done. It had not been done; but the not doing of it was a sore burden on the half-broken shoulders of many a man who sat gloomily on the benches behind Mr. Daubeny. Men, goaded as they were by their opponents, by their natural friends, and by their own consciences, could not bear it in silence, and very bitter

things were said in return. Mr. Gresham was accused of a degrading lust for power. No other feeling could prompt him to oppose with a factious acrimony never before exhibited in that House,—so said some wretched conservative with broken back and broken heart,—a measure which he himself would only be too willing to carry were he allowed the privilege of passing over to the other side of the House for the purpose. In these encounters Phineas Finn had already exhibited his powers, and, in spite of his declarations at Tankerville, had become prominent as an opponent to Mr. Daubeny's bill. He had, of course, himself been taunted, and held up in the House to the execration of his own constituents; but he had enjoyed his fight, and had remembered how his friend Mr. Monk had once told him that the pleasure lay all on the side of opposition. But on this evening he declined to speak. "I suppose you have hardly recovered from Kennedy's pistol," said Mr. Rattler, who had, of course, heard the whole story. "That, and the whole affair together have upset me," said Phineas. "Fitzgibbon will do it for you; he 's in the House." And so it happened that on that occasion the Honourable Laurence Fitzgibbon made a very effective speech against the Government.

On the next morning from the columns of the People's Banner was hurled the first of those thunderbolts with which it was the purpose of Mr. Slide absolutely to destroy the political and social life of Phineas Finn. He would not miss his aim as Mr. Kennedy had done. He would strike such blows that no constituency should ever venture to return Mr. Finn again to Parliament; and he thought that he could also so

strike his blows that no mighty nobleman, no distinguished commoner, no lady of rank should again care to entertain the miscreant and feed him with the dainties of fashion. The first thunderbolt was as follows:—

"We abstained yesterday from alluding to a circumstance which occurred at a small hotel in Judd Street on Sunday afternoon, and which, as we observe, was mentioned by one of our contemporaries. The names, however, were not given, although the persons implicated were indicated. We can see no reason why the names should be concealed. Indeed, as both the gentlemen concerned have been guilty of very great criminality, we think that we are bound to tell the whole story,—and this the more especially as certain circumstances have in a very peculiar manner placed us in possession of the facts.

"It is no secret that for the last two years Lady Laura Kennedy has been separated from her husband, the Honourable Robert Kennedy, who, in the last administration, under Mr. Mildmay, held the office of Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster; and we believe as little a secret that Mr. Kennedy has been very persistent in endeavouring to recall his wife to her home. With equal persistence she has refused to obey, and we have in our hands the clearest possible evidence that Mr. Kennedy has attributed her obstinate refusal to influence exercised over her by Mr. Phineas Finn, who three years since was her father's nominee for the then existing borough of Loughton, and who lately succeeded in ousting poor Mr. Browborough from his seat for Tankerville by his impetuous promises to support that very measure of Church Reform which he

is now opposing with that venom which makes him valuable to his party. Whether Mr. Phineas Finn will ever sit in another Parliament we cannot, of course, say, but we think we can at least assure him that he will never again sit for Tankerville.

"On last Sunday afternoon Mr. Finn, knowing well the feeling with which he is regarded by Mr. Kennedy, outraged all decency by calling upon that gentleman, whose address he obtained from our office. What took place between them no one knows, and, probably, no one ever will know. But the interview was ended by Mr. Kennedy firing a pistol at Mr. Finn's head. That he should have done so without the grossest provocation no one will believe. That Mr. Finn had gone to the husband to interfere with him respecting his wife is an undoubted fact,—a fact which, if necessary, we are in a position to prove. That such interference must have been most heart-rending every one will admit. This intruder, who had thrust himself upon the unfortunate husband on the Sabbath afternoon, was the very man whom the husband accuses of having robbed him of the company and comfort of his wife. But we cannot, on that account, absolve Mr. Kennedy of the criminality of his act. It should be for a jury to decide what view should be taken of that act, and to say how far the outrageous provocation offered should be allowed to palliate the offence. But hitherto the matter has not reached the police. Mr. Finn was not struck, and managed to escape from the room. It was his manifest duty as one of the community, and more especially so as a member of Parliament, to have reported all the circumstances at once to the police. This was not done by him, nor by the persons who

keep the hotel. That Mr. Finn should have reasons of his own for keeping the whole affair secret, and for screening the attempt at murder, is clear enough. What inducements have been used with the people of the house we cannot, of course, say. But we understand that Mr. Kennedy has been allowed to leave London without molestation.

"Such is the true story of what occurred on Sunday afternoon in Judd Street, and, knowing what we do, we think ourselves justified in calling upon Major Mackintosh to take the case into his own hands." (Now Major Mackintosh was at this time the head of the London constabulary.) "It is quite out of the question that such a transaction should take place in the heart of London at three o'clock on a Sunday afternoon, and be allowed to pass without notice. We intend to keep as little of what we know from the public as possible, and do not hesitate to acknowledge that we are debarred by an injunction of the Vice-Chancellor from publishing a certain document which would throw the clearest light upon the whole circumstance. As soon as possible after the shot was fired Mr. Finn went to work, and, as we think, by misrepresentations, obtained the injunction early on yesterday morning. We feel sure that it would not have been granted had the transaction in Judd Street been at the time known to the Vice-Chancellor in all its enormity. Our hands are, of course, tied. The document in question is still with us, but it is sacred. When called upon to show it by any proper authority we shall be ready; but, knowing what we do know, we should not be justified in allowing the matter to sleep. In the meantime we call upon those whose duty it is to preserve the public

peace to take the steps necessary for bringing the delinquents to justice.

"The effect upon Mr. Finn, we should say, must be his immediate withdrawal from public life. For the last year or two he has held some subordinate but permanent place in Ireland, which he has given up on the rumour that the party to which he has attached himself is likely to return to office. That he is a seeker after office is notorious. That any possible Government should now employ him, even as a tide-waiter, is quite out of the question; and it is equally out of the question that he should be again returned to Parliament, were he to resign his seat on accepting office. As it is, we believe, notorious that this gentleman cannot maintain the position which he holds without being paid for his services, it is reasonable to suppose that his friends will recommend him to retire, and seek his living in some obscure, and, let us hope, honest profession."

Mr. Slide, when his thunderbolt was prepared, read it over with delight, but still with some fear as to probable results. It was expedient that he should avoid a prosecution for libel, and essential that he should not offend the majesty of the Vice-Chancellor's injunction. Was he sure that he was safe in each direction? As to the libel, he could not tell himself that he was certainly safe. He was saying very hard things both of Lady Laura and of Phineas Finn, and sailing very near the wind. But neither of those persons would probably be willing to prosecute; and, should he be prosecuted, he would then, at any rate, be able to give in Mr. Kennedy's letter as evidence in his own defence. He really did believe that what he was doing was all

done in the cause of morality. It was the business of such a paper as that which he conducted to run some risk in defending morals, and exposing distinguished culprits on behalf of the public. And then, without some such risk, how could Phineas Finn be adequately punished for the atrocious treachery of which he had been guilty? As to the Chancellor's order, Mr. Slide thought that he had managed that matter very completely. No doubt he had acted in direct opposition to the spirit of the injunction, but legal orders are read by the letter, and not by the spirit. It was open to him to publish anything he pleased respecting Mr. Kennedy and his wife, subject, of course, to the general laws of the land in regard to libel. The Vice-Chancellor's special order to him referred simply to a particular document, and from that document he had not quoted a word, though he had contrived to repeat all the bitter things which it contained, with much added venom of his own. He felt secure of being safe from any active anger on the part of the Vice-Chancellor.

The article was printed and published. The reader will perceive that it was full of lies. It began with a lie in that statement that "we abstained yesterday from alluding to circumstances" which had been unknown to the writer when his yesterday's paper was published. The indignant reference to poor Finn's want of delicacy in forcing himself upon Mr. Kennedy on the Sabbath afternoon, was, of course, a tissue of lies. The visit had been made almost at the instigation of the editor himself. The paper from beginning to end was full of falsehood and malice, and had been written with the express intention of creating prejudice against the man who had offended the writer. But Mr. Slide did not

know that he was lying, and did not know that he was malicious. The weapon which he used was one to which his hand was accustomed, and he had been led by practice to believe that the use of such weapons by one in his position was not only fair, but also beneficial to the public. Had anybody suggested to him that he was stabbing his enemy in the dark, he would have averred that he was doing nothing of the kind, because the anonymous accusation of sinners in high rank was, on behalf of the public, the special duty of writers and editors attached to the public press. Mr. Slide's blood was running high with virtuous indignation against our hero as he inserted those last cruel words as to the choice of an obscure but honest profession.

Phineas Finn read the article before he sat down to breakfast on the following morning, and the dagger went right into his bosom. Every word told upon him. With a jaunty laugh within his own sleeve he had assured himself that he was safe against any wound which could be inflicted on him from the columns of the People's Banner. He had been sure that he would be attacked, and thought that he was armed to bear it. But the thin blade penetrated every joint of his harness, and every particle of the poison curdled in his blood. He was hurt about Lady Laura; he was hurt about his borough of Tankerville; he was hurt by the charges against him of having outraged delicacy; he was hurt by being handed over to the tender mercies of Major Mackintosh; he was hurt by the craft with which the Vice-Chancellor's injunction had been evaded; but he was specially hurt by the allusions to his own poverty. It was necessary that he should earn his bread, and no doubt he was a seeker after place. But he did not

wish to obtain wages without working for them; and he did not see why the work and wages of a public office should be less honourable than those of any other profession. To him, with his ideas, there was no profession so honourable, as certainly there were none which demanded greater sacrifices or were more precarious. And he did believe that such an article as that would have the effect of shutting against him the gates of that dangerous Paradise which he desired to enter. He had no great claim upon his party; and, in giving away the good things of office, the giver is only too prone to recognise any objections against an individual which may seem to relieve him from the necessity of bestowing aught in that direction. Phineas felt that he would almost be ashamed to show his face at the clubs or in the House. He must do so as a matter of course, but he knew that he could not do so without confessing by his visage that he had been deeply wounded by the attack in the People's Banner.

He went in the first instance to Mr. Low, and was almost surprised that Mr. Low should not yet even have heard that such an attack had been made. He had almost felt, as he walked to Lincoln's Inn, that everybody had looked at him, and that passers-by in the street had declared to each other that he was the unfortunate one who had been doomed by the editor of the People's Banner to seek some obscure way of earning his bread. Mr. Low took the paper, read, or probably only half read, the article, and then threw the sheet aside as worthless. "What ought I to do?"

"Nothing at all."

"One's first desire would be to beat him to a jelly."

"Of all courses that would be the worst, and would most certainly conduce to his triumph."

"Just so;—I only allude to the pleasure one would have, but which one has to deny one's self. I don't know whether he has laid himself open for libel."

"I should think not. I have only just glanced at it, and therefore can't give an opinion; but I should think you would not dream of such a thing. Your object is to screen Lady Laura's name."

"I have to think of that first."

"It may be necessary that steps should be taken to defend her character. If an accusation be made with such publicity as to enforce belief if not denied, the denial must be made, and may probably be best made by an action for libel. But that must be done by her or her friends,—but certainly not by you."

"He has laughed at the Vice-Chancellor's injunction."

"I don't think that you can interfere. If, as you believe, Mr. Kennedy be insane, that fact will probably soon be proved, and will have the effect of clearing Lady Laura's character. A wife may be excused for leaving a mad husband."

"And you think I should do nothing?"

"I don't see what you can do. You have encountered a chimney-sweeper, and of course you get some of the soot. What you do do, and what you do not do, must depend at any rate on the wishes of Lady Laura Kennedy and her father. It is a matter in which you must make yourself subordinate to them."

Fuming and fretting, and yet recognising the truth of Mr. Low's words, Phineas left the chambers, and went down to his club. It was a Wednesday, and the

House was to sit in the morning; but before he went to the House he put himself in the way of certain of his associates in order that he might hear what would be said, and learn if possible what was thought. Nobody seemed to treat the accusations in the newspaper as very serious, though all around him congratulated him on his escape from Mr. Kennedy's pistol. "I suppose the poor man really is mad," said Lord Cantrip, whom he met on the steps of one of the clubs.

"No doubt, I should say."

"I can't understand why you did n't go to the police."

"I had hoped the thing would not become public," said Phineas.

"Everything becomes public;—everything of that kind. It is very hard upon poor Lady Laura."

"That is the worst of it, Lord Cantrip."

"If I were her father I should bring her to England, and demand a separation in a regular and legal way. That is what he should do now in her behalf. She would then have an opportunity of clearing her character from imputations which, to a certain extent, will affect it, even though they come from a madman, and from the very scum of the press."

"You have read that article?"

"Yes;—I saw it but a minute ago."

"I need not tell you that there is not the faintest ground in the world for the imputation made against Lady Laura there."

"I am sure that there is none;—and therefore it is that I tell you my opinion so plainly. I think that Lord Brentford should be advised to bring Lady Laura to England, and to put down the charges openly in court. It might be done either by an application to

the divorce court for a separation, or by an action against the newspaper for libel. I do not know Lord Brentford quite well enough to intrude upon him with a letter, but I have no objection whatever to having my name mentioned to him. He and I and you and poor Mr. Kennedy sat together in the same Government, and I think that Lord Brentford would trust my friendship so far." Phineas thanked him, and assured him that what he had said should be conveyed to Lord Brentford.

CHAPTER II.

THE SPOONER CORRESPONDENCE.

It will be remembered that Adelaide Palliser had accepted the hand of Mr. Maule, junior, and that she and Lady Chiltern between them had despatched him up to London on an embassy to his father, in which he failed very signally. It had been originally Lady Chiltern's idea that the proper home for the young couple would be the ancestral hall which must be theirs some day, and in which, with exceeding prudence, they might be able to live as Maules of Maule Abbey upon the very limited income which would belong to them. How slight were the grounds for imputing such stern prudence to Gerard Maule both the ladies felt;—but it had become essential to do something; the young people were engaged to each other, and a manner of life must be suggested, discussed, and, as far as possible, arranged. Lady Chiltern was useful at such work, having a practical turn of mind, and understanding well the condition of life for which it was necessary that her friend should prepare herself. The lover was not vicious, he neither drank nor gambled, nor ran himself hopelessly in debt. He was good-humoured and tractable, and docile enough when nothing disagreeable was asked from him. He would have, he said, no objection to live at Maule Abbey if Adelaide liked it. He did n't believe much in farming, but would consent at Adelaide's request to be the owner

of bullocks. He was quite ready to give up hunting, having already taught himself to think that the very few good runs in a season were hardly worth the trouble of getting up before daylight all the winter. He went forth, therefore, on his embassy, and we know how he failed. Another lover would have communicated the disastrous tidings at once to the lady; but Gerard Maule waited a week before he did so, and then told his story in half-a-dozen words. "The governor cut up rough about Maule Abbey, and will not hear of it. He generally does cut up rough."

"But he must be made to hear of it," said Lady Chiltern. Two days afterwards the news reached Harrington of the death of the Duke of Omnium. A letter of an official nature reached Adelaide from Mr. Fothergill, in which the writer explained that he had been desired by Mr. Palliser to communicate to her and the relatives the sad tidings. "So the poor old man has gone at last," said Lady Chiltern, with that affectation of funereal gravity which is common to all of us.

"Poor old Duke!" said Adelaide. "I have been hearing of him as a sort of bugbear all my life. I don't think I ever saw him but once, and then he gave me a kiss and a pair of earrings. He never paid any attention to us at all, but we were taught to think that Providence had been very good to us in making the Duke our uncle."

"He was very rich?"

"Horribly rich, I have always heard."

"Won't he leave you something? It would be very nice now that you are engaged to find that he has given you five thousand pounds."

"Very nice indeed;—but there is not a chance of it. It has always been known that everything is to go to the heir. Papa had his fortune and spent it. He and his brother were never friends, and though the Duke did once give me a kiss I imagine that he forgot my existence immediately afterwards."

"So the Duke of Omnium is dead," said Lord Chiltern, when he came home that evening.

"Adelaide has had a letter to tell her so this afternoon."

"Mr. Fothergill wrote to me," said Adelaide;—"the man who is so wicked about the foxes."

"I don't care a straw about Mr. Fothergill; and now my mouth is closed against your uncle. But it 's quite frightful to think that a Duke of Omnium must die like anybody else."

"The Duke is dead;—long live the Duke," said Lady Chiltern. "I wonder how Mr. Palliser will like it."

"Men always do like it, I suppose," said Adelaide.

"Women do," said Lord Chiltern. "Lady Glencora will be delighted to reign,—though I can hardly fancy her by any other name. By-the-bye, Adelaide, I have got a letter for you."

"A letter for me, Lord Chiltern!"

"Well,—yes; I suppose I had better give it you. It is not addressed to you, but you must answer it."

"What on earth is it?"

"I think I can guess," said Lady Chiltern, laughing. She had guessed rightly, but Adelaide Palliser was still altogether in the dark when Lord Chiltern took a letter from his pocket and handed it to her. As he did so he left the room, and his wife followed him. "I shall

be upstairs, Adelaide, if you want advice," said Lady Chiltern.

The letter was from Mr. Spooner. He had left Harrington Hall after the uncourteous reception which had been accorded to him by Miss Palliser, in deep disgust, resolving that he would never again speak to her, and almost resolving that Spoon Hall should never have a mistress in his time. But with his wine after dinner his courage came back to him, and he began to reflect once more that it is not the habit of young ladies to accept their lovers at the first offer. There was living with Mr. Spooner at this time a very attached friend, whom he usually consulted in all emergencies, and to whom on this occasion he opened his heart. Mr. Edward Spooner, commonly called Ned by all who knew him, and not unfrequently so addressed by those who did not, was a distant cousin of the squire's, who unfortunately had no particular income of his own. For the last ten years he had lived at Spoon Hall, and had certainly earned his bread. The squire had achieved a certain credit for success as a country gentleman. Nothing about his place was out of order. His own farming, which was extensive, succeeded. His bullocks and sheep won prizes. His horses were always useful and healthy. His tenants were solvent, if not satisfied, and he himself did not owe a shilling. Now many people in the neighbourhood attributed all this to the judicious care of Mr. Edward Spooner, whose eye was never off the place, and whose discretion was equal to his zeal. In giving the squire his due one must acknowledge that he recognised the merits of his cousin, and trusted him in everything. That night, as soon as the customary

bottle of claret had succeeded the absolutely normal bottle of port after dinner, Mr. Spooner of Spoon Hall opened his heart to his cousin.

"I shall have to walk, then," said Ned.

"Not if I know it," said the squire. "You don't suppose I 'm going to let any woman have the command of Spoon Hall?"

"They do command,—inside, you know."

"No woman shall ever turn you out of this house, Ned."

"I 'm not thinking of myself, Tom," said the cousin. "Of course you 'll marry some day, and of course I must take my chance. I don't see why it should n't be Miss Palliser as well as another."

"The jade almost made me angry."

"I suppose that 's the way with most of 'em. 'Ludit exultim metuitque tangi.'" For Ned Spooner had himself preserved some few tattered shreds of learning from his school-days. "You don't remember about the filly?"

"Yes I do; very well," said the squire.

"'Nuptiarum expers.' That 's what it is, I suppose. Try it again." The advice on the part of the cousin was genuine and unselfish. That Mr. Spooner of Spoon Hall should be rejected by a young lady without any fortune seemed to him to be impossible. At any rate it is the duty of a man in such circumstances to persevere. As far as Ned knew the world, ladies always required to be asked a second or a third time. And then no harm can come from such perseverance. "She can't break your bones, Tom."

There was much honesty displayed on this occasion. The squire, when he was thus instigated to persevere,

did his best to describe the manner in which he had been rejected. His powers of description were not very great, but he did not conceal anything wilfully. "She was as hard as nails, you know."

"I don't know that that means much. Horace's filly kicked a few, no doubt."

"She told me that if I 'd go one way, she 'd go the other!"

"They always say about the hardest things that come to their tongues. They don't curse and swear as we do, or there 'd be no bearing them. If you really like her——"

"She 's such a well-built creature! There 's a look of blood about her I don't see in any of 'em. That sort of breeding is what one wants to get through the mud with."

Then it was that the cousin recommended a letter to Lord Chiltern. Lord Chiltern was at the present moment to be regarded as the lady's guardian, and was the lover's intimate friend. A direct proposal had already been made to the young lady, and this should now be repeated to the gentleman who for the time stood in the position of her father. The squire for a while hesitated, declaring that he was averse to make his secret known to Lord Chiltern. "One does n't want every fellow in the country to know it," he said. But in answer to this the cousin was very explicit. There could be but little doubt that Lord Chiltern knew the secret already; and he would certainly be rather induced to keep it as a secret than to divulge it if it were communicated to him officially. And what other step could the squire take? It would not be likely that he should be asked again to Harrington Hall with

the express view of repeating his offer. The cousin was quite of opinion that a written proposition should be made; and on that very night the cousin himself wrote out a letter for the squire to copy in the morning. On the morning the squire copied the letter,—not without additions of his own, as to which he had very many words with his discreet cousin,—and in a formal manner handed it to Lord Chiltern towards the afternoon of that day, having devoted his whole morning to the finding of a proper opportunity for doing so. Lord Chiltern had read the letter, and had, as we see, delivered it to Adelaide Palliser. "That 's another proposal from Mr. Spooner," Lady Chiltern said, as soon as they were alone.

"Exactly that."

"I knew he 'd go on with it. Men are such fools."

"I don't see that he 's a fool at all;" said Lord Chiltern, almost in anger. "Why should n't he ask a girl to be his wife? He 's a rich man, and she has n't got a farthing."

"You might say the same of a butcher, Oswald."

"Mr. Spooner is a gentleman."

"You do not mean to say that he 's fit to marry such a girl as Adelaide Palliser?"

"I don't know what makes fitness. He 's got a red nose, and if she don't like a red nose,—that 's unfitness. Gerard Maule's nose is n't red, and I dare say therefore he 's fitter. Only, unfortunately, he has no money."

"Adelaide Palliser would no more think of marrying Mr. Spooner than you would have thought of marrying the cook."

"If I had liked the cook I should have asked her,

and I don't see why Mr. Spooner should n't ask Miss Palliser. She need n't take him."

In the meantime Miss Palliser was reading the following letter:—

"Spoon Hall, 11th March, 18—.

"My dear Lord Chiltern,—I venture to suppose that at present you are acting as the guardian of Miss Palliser, who has been staying at your house all the winter. If I am wrong in this hope you will pardon me, and consent to act in that capacity for this occasion. I entertain feelings of the greatest admiration and warmest affection for the young lady I have named, which I ventured to express when I had the pleasure of staying at Harrington Hall in the early part of last month. I cannot boast that I was received on that occasion with much favour; but I know that I am not very good at talking, and we are told in all the books that no man has a right to expect to be taken at the first time of asking. Perhaps Miss Palliser will allow me, through you, to request her to consider my proposal with more deliberation than was allowed to me before, when I spoke to her perhaps with injudicious hurry." (So far the squire adopted his cousin's words without alteration.)

"I am the owner of my own property,—which is more than everybody can say. My income is nearly £4,000 a year. I shall be willing to make any proper settlement that may be recommended by the lawyers, —though I am strongly of opinion that an estate should n't be crippled for the sake of the widow. As to refurnishing the old house, and all that, I 'll do anything that Miss Palliser may please. She knows my taste about hunting, and I know hers, so that there need not be any difference of opinion on that score.

"Miss Palliser can't suspect me of any interested motives. I come forward because I think she is the most charming girl I ever saw, and because I love her with all my heart. I have n't got very much to say for myself, but if she 'll consent to be the mistress of Spoon Hall, she shall have all that the heart of a woman can desire.

"Pray believe me,
"My dear Lord Chiltern,
"Yours very sincerely,
"THOMAS PLATTER SPOONER.

"As I believe that Miss Palliser is fond of books, it may be well to tell her that there is an uncommon good library at Spoon Hall. I shall have no objection to go abroad for the honeymoon for three or four months in the summer."

The postscript was the squire's own, and was inserted in opposition to the cousin's judgment. "She won't come for the sake of the books," said the cousin. But the squire thought that the attractions should be piled up. "I would n't talk of the honeymoon till I 'd got her to come round a little," said the cousin. The squire thought that the cousin was falsely delicate, and pleaded that all girls liked to be taken abroad when they 're married. The second half of the body of the letter was very much disfigured by the squire's petulance; so that the modesty with which he commenced was almost put to the blush by a touch of arrogance in the conclusion. That sentence in which the squire declared that an estate ought not to be crippled for the sake of the widow was very much questioned by

the cousin. "Such a word as 'widow' never ought to go into such a letter as this." But the squire protested that he would not be mealy-mouthed. "She can bear to think of it, I 'll go bail; and why should n't she hear about what she can think about?" "Don't talk about furniture yet, Tom," the cousin said; but the squire was obstinate, and the cousin became hopeless. That word about loving her with all his heart was the cousin's own, but what followed, as to her being mistress of Spoon Hall, was altogether opposed to his judgment. "She 'll be proud enough of Spoon Hall if she comes here," said the squire. "I 'd let her come first," said the cousin.

We all know that the phraseology of the letter was of no importance whatever. When it was received, the lady was engaged to another man; and she regarded Mr. Spooner of Spoon Hall as being guilty of unpardonable impudence in approaching her at all.

"A red-faced vulgar old man, who looks as if he did nothing but drink," she said to Lady Chiltern.

"He does you no harm, my dear."

"But he does do harm. He makes things very uncomfortable. He has no business to think it possible. People will suppose that I gave him encouragement."

"I used to have lovers coming to me year after year, —the same people,—whom I don't think I ever encouraged; but I never felt angry with them."

"But you did n't have Mr. Spooner."

"Mr. Spooner did n't know me in those days, or there is no saying what might have happened." Then Lady Chiltern argued the matter on views directly opposite to those which she had put forward when dis-

cussing the matter with her husband. "I always think that any man who is privileged to sit down to table with you is privileged to ask. There are disparities of course which make the privilege questionable, disparities of age, rank, and means."

"And of tastes," said Adelaide.

"I don't know about that. A poet does n't want to marry a poetess, nor a philosopher a philosopheress. A man may make himself a fool by putting himself in the way of certain refusal; but I take it, the broad rule is that a man may fall in love with any lady who habitually sits in his company."

"I don't agree with you at all. What would be said if the curate at Longroyston were to propose to one of the Fitz-Howard girls ?"

"The Duchess would probably ask the Duke to make the young man a bishop out of hand, and the Duke would have to spend a morning in explaining to her the changes which have come over the making of bishops since she was young. There is no other rule that you can lay down, and I think that girls should understand that they have to fight their battles subject to that law. It 's very easy to say 'No.'"

"But a man won't take 'No.'"

"And it 's lucky for us sometimes that they don't," said Lady Chiltern, remembering certain passages in her early life.

The answer was written that night by Lord Chiltern after much consultation. As to the nature of the answer,—that it should be a positive refusal,—of course there could be no doubt; but then arose a question whether a reason should be given, or whether the refusal should be simply a refusal. At last it was de-

cided that a reason should be given, and the letter ran as follows:—

"My dear Mr. Spooner,—I am commissioned to inform you that Miss Palliser is engaged to be married to Mr. Gerard Maule.

"Yours faithfully,

"CHILTERN."

The young lady had consented to be thus explicit because it had been already determined that no secret should be kept as to her future prospects.

"He is one of those poverty-stricken wheedling fellows that one meets about the world every day," said the squire to his cousin,—"a fellow that rides horses that he can't pay for, and owes some poor devil of a tailor for the breeches that he sits in. They eat, and drink, and get along Heaven only knows how. But they 're sure to come to smash at last. Girls are such fools now-a-days."

"I don't think there has ever been much difference in that," said the cousin.

"Because a man greases his whiskers, and colours his hair, and paints his eyebrows, and wears kid gloves, by George, they 'll go through fire and water after him. He 'll never marry her."

"So much the better for her."

"But I hate such d——d impudence. What right has a man to come forward in that way who has n't got a house over his head, or the means of getting one? Old Maule is so hard up that he can barely get a dinner at his club in London. What I wonder at is that Lady Chiltern should n't know better."

CHAPTER III.

REGRETS.

MADAME GOESLER remained at Matching till after the return of Mr. Palliser,—or as we must now call him, the Duke of Omnium—from Gatherum Castle, and was therefore able to fight her own battle with him respecting the gems and the money which had been left her. He brought to her with his own hands the single ring which she had requested, and placed it on her finger. "The goldsmith will soon make that all right," she said, when it was found to be much too large for the largest finger on which she could wear a ring. "A bit shall be taken out, but I will not have it reset."

"You got the lawyer's letter and the inventory, Madame Goesler?"

"Yes, indeed. What surprises me is that the dear old man should never have spoken of so magnificent a collection of gems."

"Orders have been given that they shall be packed."

"They may be packed or unpacked, of course as your Grace pleases, but pray do not connect me with the packing."

"You must be connected with it."

"But I wish not to be connected with it, Duke. I have written to the lawyer to renounce the legacy, and, if your Grace persists, I must employ a lawyer of my own to renounce them after some legal form.

Pray do not let the case be sent to me, or there will be so much trouble, and we shall have another great jewel robbery. I won't take it in, and I won't have the money, and I will have my own way. Lady Glen will tell you that I can be very obstinate when I please."

Lady Glencora had told him so already. She had been quite sure that her friend would persist in her determination as to the legacy, and had thought that her husband should simply accept Madame Goesler's assurances to that effect. But a man who had been Chancellor of the Exchequer could not deal with money, or even with jewels, so lightly. He assured his wife that such an arrangement was quite out of the question. He remarked that property was property, by which he meant to intimate that the real owner of substantial wealth could not be allowed to disembarrass himself of his responsibilities or strip himself of his privileges by a few generous but idle words. The late Duke's will was a very serious thing, and it seemed to the heir that this abandoning of a legacy bequeathed by the Duke was a making light of the Duke's last act and deed. To refuse money in such circumstances was almost like refusing rain from heaven, or warmth from the sun. It could not be done. The things were her property, and though she might, of course, chuck them into the street, they would no less be hers. "But I won't have them, Duke," said Madame Goesler; and the late Chancellor of the Exchequer found that no proposition made by him in the House had ever been received with a firmer opposition. His wife told him that nothing he could say would be of any avail, and rather ridiculed

his idea of the solemnity of wills. "You can't make a person take a thing because you write it down on a thick bit of paper, any more than if you gave it her across a table. I understand it all, of course. She means to show that she did n't want anything from the Duke. As she refused the name and the title, she won't have the money and jewels. You can't make her take them, and I 'm quite sure you can't talk her over." The young Duke was not persuaded, but had to give the battle up,—at any rate, for the present.

On the 19th of March Madame Goesler returned to London, having been at Matching Priory for more than three weeks. On her journey back to Park Lane many thoughts crowded on her mind. Had she, upon the whole, done well in reference to the Duke of Omnium? The last three years of her life had been sacrificed to an old man with whom she had not in truth possessed aught in common. She had persuaded herself that there had existed a warm friendship between them;—but of what nature could have been a friendship with one whom she had not known till he had been in his dotage. What words of the Duke's speaking had she ever heard with pleasure, except certain terms of affection which had been half mawkish and half senile? She had told Phineas Finn, while riding home with him from Broughton Spinnies, that she had clung to the Duke because she loved him; but what had there been to produce such love? The Duke had begun his acquaintance with her by insulting her,—and had then offered to make her his wife. This,—which would have conferred upon her some tangible advantages, such as rank, and wealth, and a great name—she had refused, thinking that the price to be

paid for them was too high, and that life might even yet have something better in store for her. After that she had permitted herself to become, after a fashion, head nurse to the old man, and in that pursuit had wasted three years of what remained to her of her youth. People, at any rate, should not say of her that she had accepted payment for the three years' service by taking a casket of jewels. She would take nothing that should justify any man in saying that she had been enriched by her acquaintance with the Duke of Omnium. It might be that she had been foolish, but she would be more foolish still were she to accept a reward for her folly. As it was, there had been something of romance in it,—though the romance of friendship at the bedside of a sick and selfish old man had hardly been satisfactory.

Even in her close connection with the present Duchess there was something which was almost hollow. Had there not been a compact between them, never expressed, but not the less understood? Had not her dear friend, Lady Glen, agreed to bestow upon her support, fashion, and all kinds of worldly good things,—on condition that she never married the old Duke? She had liked Lady Glencora,—had enjoyed her friend's society, and been happy in her friend's company,—but she had always felt that Lady Glencora's attraction to herself had been simply on the score of the Duke. It was necessary that the Duke should be pampered and kept in good humour. An old man, let him be ever so old, can do what he likes with himself and his belongings. To keep the Duke out of harm's way, Lady Glencora had opened her arms to Madame Goesler. Such, at least, was the interpreta-

tion which Madame Goesler chose to give to the history of the last three years. They had not, she thought, quite understood her. When once she had made up her mind not to marry the Duke, the Duke had been safe from her;—as his jewels and money should be safe now that he was dead.

Three years had passed by, and nothing had been done of that which she had intended to do. Three years had passed, which to her, with her desires, were so important. And yet she hardly knew what were her desires, and had never quite defined her intentions. She told herself on this very journey that the time had now gone by, and that in losing these three years she had lost everything. And yet,—so she declared to herself now,—the world had done but little for her. Two old men had loved her; one had become her husband and the other had asked to become so;—and to both she had done her duty. To both she had been grateful, tender, and self-sacrificing. From the former she had, as his widow, taken wealth which she valued greatly; but the wealth alone had given her no happiness. From the latter, and from his family, she had accepted a certain position. Some persons, high in repute and fashion, had known her before, but everybody knew her now. And yet what had all this done for her? Dukes and duchesses, dinner-parties and drawing-rooms,—what did they all amount to? What was it that she wanted?

She was ashamed to tell herself that it was love. But she knew this,—that it was necessary for her happiness that she should devote herself to some one. All the elegancies and outward charms of life were delightful, if only they could be used as the means to some

end. As an end themselves they were nothing. She had devoted herself to this old man who was now dead, and there had been moments in which she had thought that that sufficed. But it had not sufficed, and instead of being borne down by grief at the loss of her friend, she found herself almost rejoicing at relief from a vexatious burden. Had she been a hypocrite then? Was it her nature to be false? After that she reflected whether it might not be best for her to become a devotee,—it did not matter much in what branch of the Christian religion, so that she could assume some form of faith. The sour strictness of the confident Calvinist or the asceticism of St. Francis might suit her equally,—if she could only believe in Calvin or in St. Francis. She had tried to believe in the Duke of Omnium, but there she had failed. There had been a saint at whose shrine she thought she could have worshipped with a constant and happy devotion, but that saint had repulsed her from his altar.

Mr. Maule, senior, not understanding much of all this, but still understanding something, thought that he might perhaps be the saint. He knew well that audacity in asking is a great merit in a middle-aged wooer. He was a good deal older than the lady, who in spite of all her experiences, was hardly yet thirty. But then he was,—he felt sure,—very young for his age, whereas she was old. She was a widow; he was a widower. She had a house in town and an income. He had a place in the country and an estate. She knew all the dukes and duchesses, and he was a man of family. She could make him comfortably opulent. He could make her Mrs. Maule of Maule Abbey. She, no doubt, was good-looking. Mr.

Maule, senior, as he tied on his cravat, thought that even in that respect there was no great disparity between them. Considering his own age, Mr. Maule, senior, thought there was not perhaps a better looking man than himself about Pall Mall. He was a little stiff in the joints and moved rather slowly, but what was wanting in suppleness was certainly made up in dignity.

He watched his opportunity, and called in Park Lane on the day after Madame Goesler's return. There was already between them an amount of acquaintance which justified his calling, and, perhaps, there had been on the lady's part something of that cordiality of manner which is wont to lead to intimate friendship. Mr. Maule had made himself agreeable, and Madame Goesler had seemed to be grateful. He was admitted, and on such an occasion it was impossible not to begin the conversation about the "dear Duke." Mr. Maule could afford to talk about the Duke, and to lay aside for a short time his own cause, as he had not suggested to himself the possibility of becoming pressingly tender on his own behalf on this particular occasion. Audacity in wooing is a great virtue, but a man must measure even his virtues. "I heard that you had gone to Matching, as soon as the poor Duke was taken ill," he said.

She was in mourning, and had never for a moment thought of denying the peculiarity of the position she had held in reference to the old man. She could not have been content to wear her ordinary coloured garments after sitting so long by the side of the dying man. A hired nurse may do so, but she had not been that. If there had been hypocrisy in her friendship, the hypocrisy must be maintained to the end.

"Poor old man! I only came back yesterday."

"I never had the pleasure of knowing his Grace," said Mr. Maule. "But I have always heard him named as a nobleman of whom England might well be proud."

Madame Goesler was not at the moment inclined to tell lies on the matter, and did not think that England had much cause to be proud of the Duke of Omnium. "He was a man who held a very peculiar position," she said.

"Most peculiar;—a man of infinite wealth, and of that special dignity which I am sorry to say so many men of rank among us are throwing aside as a garment which is too much for them. We can all wear coats, but it is not every one that can carry a robe. The Duke carried his to the last." Madame Goesler remembered how he looked with his nightcap on, when he had lost his temper because they would not let him have a glass of curaçoa. "I don't know that we have any one left that can be said to be his equal," continued Mr. Maule.

"No one like him, perhaps. He was never married, you know."

"But was once willing to marry," said Mr. Maule, if all that we hear be true." Madame Goesler, without a smile and equally without a frown, looked as though the meaning of Mr. Maule's words had escaped her. "A grand old gentleman! I don't know that anybody will ever say as much for his heir."

"The men are very different."

"Very different indeed. I dare say that Mr. Palliser, as Mr. Palliser, has been a useful man. But so is a coalheaver a useful man. The grace and beauty of life will be clean gone when we all become useful men."

"I don't think we are near that yet."

"Upon my word, Madame Goesler, I am not so sure about it. Here are sons of noblemen going into trade on every side of us. We have earls dealing in butter, and marquises sending their peaches to market. There was nothing of that kind about the Duke. A great fortune had been entrusted to him, and he knew that it was his duty to spend it. He did spend it, and all the world looked up to him. It must have been a great pleasure to you to know him so well."

Madame Goesler was saved the necessity of making any answer to this by the announcement of another visitor. The door was opened, and Phineas Finn entered the room. He had not seen Madame Goesler since they had been together at Harrington Hall, and had never before met Mr. Maule. When riding home with the lady after their unsuccessful attempt to jump out of the wood, Phineas had promised to call in Park Lane whenever he should learn that Madame Goesler was not at Matching. Since that the Duke had died, and the bond with Matching no longer existed. It seemed but the other day that they were talking about the Duke together, and now the Duke was gone. "I see you are in mourning," said Phineas, as he still held her hand. "I must say one word to condole with you for your lost friend."

"Mr. Maule and I were now speaking of him," she said, as she introduced the two gentlemen. "Mr. Finn and I had the pleasure of meeting your son at Harrington Hall a few weeks since, Mr. Maule."

"I heard that he had been there. Did you know the Duke, Mr. Finn?"

"After the fashion in which such a one as I would

know such a one as the Duke, I knew him. He probably had forgotten my existence."

"He never forgot any one," said Madame Goesler.

"I don't know that I was ever introduced to him," continued Mr. Maule, "and I shall always regret it. I was telling Madame Goesler how profound a reverence I had for the Duke's character." Phineas bowed, and Madame Goesler, who was becoming tired of the Duke as a subject of conversation, asked some question as to what had been going on in the House. Mr. Maule, finding it to be improbable that he should be able to advance his cause on that occasion, took his leave. The moment he was gone, Madame Goesler's manner changed altogether. She left her former seat and came near to Phineas, sitting on a sofa close to the chair he occupied; and as she did so she pushed her hair back from her face in a manner that he remembered well in former days.

"I am so glad to see you," she said. "Is it not odd that he should have gone so soon, after what we were saying but the other day?"

"You thought then that he would not last long."

"Long is comparative. I did not think he would be dead within six weeks, or I should not have been riding there. He was a burden to me, Mr. Finn."

"I can understand that."

"And yet I shall miss him sorely. He had given all the colour to my life which it possessed. It was not very bright, but still it was colour."

"The house will be open to you just the same."

"I shall not go there. I shall see Lady Glencora in town, of course; but I shall not go to Matching; and as to Gatherum Castle, I would not spend another

week there, if they would give it me. You have n't heard of his will ? "

"No;—not a word. I hope he remembered you, —to mention your name. You hardly wanted more."

"Just so. I wanted no more than that."

"It was made, perhaps, before you knew him."

"He was always making it, and always altering it. He left me money, and jewels of enormous value."

"I am so glad to hear it."

"But I have refused to take anything. Am I not right ? "

"I don't know why you should refuse."

"There are people who will say that—I was his mistress. If a woman be young a man's age never prevents such scandal. I don't know that I can stop it, but I can perhaps make it seem to be less probable. And after all that has passed, I could not bear that the Pallisers should think that I clung to him for what I could get. I should be easier this way."

"Whatever is best to be done, you will do it;—I know that."

"Your praise goes beyond the mark, my friend. I can be both generous and discreet;—but the difficulty is to be true. I did take one thing—a black diamond that he always wore. I would show it you, but the goldsmith has it to make it fit me. When does the great affair come off at the House ? "

"The bill will be read again on Monday, the first."

"What an unfortunate day!—You remember young Mr. Maule? Is he not like his father? And yet in manners they are as unlike as possible."

"What is the father ? " Phineas asked.

"A battered old beau about London, selfish and

civil, pleasant and penniless, and I should think utterly without a principle. Come again soon. I am so anxious to hear that you are getting on. And you have got to tell me all about that shooting with the pistol." Phineas as he walked away thought that Madame Goesler was handsomer even than she used to be.

CHAPTER IV.

THE DUKE AND DUCHESS IN TOWN.

At the end of March the Duchess of Omnium, never more to be called Lady Glencora by the world at large, came up to London. The Duke, though he was now banished from the House of Commons, was nevertheless wanted in London; and what funereal ceremonies were left might be accomplished as well in town as at Matching Priory. No old ministry could be turned out and no new ministry formed without the assistance of the young Duchess. It was a question whether she should not be asked to be Mistress of the Robes, though those who asked it knew very well that she was the last woman in England to hamper herself by dependence on the Court. Up to London they came; and, though of course they went into no society, the house in Carleton Gardens was continually thronged with people who had some special reason for breaking the ordinary rules of etiquette in their desire to see how Lady Glencora carried herself as Duchess of Omnium. "Do you think she 's altered much?" said Aspasia Fitzgibbon, an elderly spinster, the daughter of Lord Claddagh, and sister of Laurence Fitzgibbon, member for one of the western Irish counties. "I don't think she was quite so loud as she used to be."

Mrs. Bonteen was of opinion that there was a change.

"She was always uncertain, you know, and would scratch like a cat if you offended her."

"And won't she scratch now?" asked Miss Fitzgibbon.

"I 'm afraid she 'll scratch oftener. It was always a trick of hers to pretend to think nothing of rank;—but she values her place as highly as any woman in England."

This was Mrs. Bonteen's opinion; but Lady Baldock, who was present, differed. This Lady Baldock was not the mother, but the sister-in-law, of that Augusta Boreham who had lately become Sister Veronica John. "I don't believe it," said Lady Baldock. "She always seems to me to be like a great school-girl who has been allowed too much of her own way. I think people give way to her too much, you know." As Lady Baldock was herself the wife of a peer, she naturally did not stand so much in awe of a duchess as did Mrs. Bonteen, or Miss Fitzgibbon.

"Have you seen the young Duke?" asked Mr. Rattler of Barrington Erle.

"Yes; I have been with him this morning."

"How does he like it?"

"He 's bothered out of his life,—as a hen would be if you were to throw her into water. He 's so shy, he hardly knows how to speak to you; and he broke down altogether when I said something about the Lords."

"He 'll not do much more."

"I don't know about that," said Erle. "He 'll get used to it, and go into harness again. He 's a great deal too good to be lost."

"He did n't give himself airs?"

"What!—Planty Pall! If I know anything of a

man he 's not the man to do that because he 's a duke. He can hold his own against all comers, and always could. Quiet as he always seemed, he knew who he was, and who other people were. I don't think you 'll find much difference in him when he has got over the annoyance." Mr. Rattler, however, was of a different opinion. Mr. Rattler had known many docile members of the House of Commons who had become peers by the death of uncles and fathers, and who had lost all respect for him as soon as they were released from the crack of the whip. Mr. Rattler rather despised peers who had been members of the House of Commons, and who passed by inheritance from a scene of unparalleled use and influence to one of idle and luxurious dignity.

Soon after their arrival in London the Duchess wrote the following very characteristic letter:—

"Dear Lord Chiltern,—Mr. Palliser——" (Then having begun with a mistake, she scratched the word through with her pen.) "The Duke has asked me to write about Trumpeton Wood, as he knows nothing about it, and I know just as little. But if you say what you want, it shall be done. Shall we get foxes and put them there? Or ought there to be a special fox-keeper? You must n't be angry because the poor old Duke was too feeble to take notice of the matter. Only speak, and it shall be done.

"Yours faithfully,

"Glencora O.

"Madame Goesler spoke to me about it; but at that time we were in trouble."

The answer was as characteristic:—

"Dear Duchess of Omnium,—Thanks. What is wanted, is that keepers should know that there are to be foxes. When keepers know that foxes are really expected, there always are foxes. The men latterly have known just the contrary. It is all a question of shooting. I don't mean to say a word against the late Duke. When he got old the thing became bad. No doubt it will be right now.

"Faithfully yours,

"CHILTERN.

"Our hounds have been poisoned in Trumpeton Wood. This would never have been done had not the keepers been against the hunting."

Upon receipt of this she sent the letter to Mr. Fothergill, with a request that there might be no more shooting in Trumpeton Wood. "I 'll be shot if we 'll stand that, you know," said Mr. Fothergill to one of his underlings. "There are two hundred and fifty acres in Trumpeton Wood, and we 're never to kill another pheasant because Lord Chiltern is master of the Brake hounds. Property won't be worth having at that rate."

The Duke by no means intended to abandon the world of politics, or even the narrower sphere of ministerial work, because he had been ousted from the House of Commons, and from the possibility of filling the office which he had best liked. This was proved to the world by the choice of his house for a meeting of the party on the 30th of March. As it happened, this was the very day on which he and the Duchess

returned to London; but nevertheless the meeting was held there, and he was present at it. Mr. Gresham then repeated his reasons for opposing Mr. Daubeny's bill; and declared that even while doing so he would, with the approbation of his party, pledge himself to bring in a bill somewhat to the same effect, should he ever again find himself in power. And he declared that he would do this solely with the view of showing how strong was his opinion that such a measure should not be left in the hands of the conservative party. It was doubted whether such a political proposition had ever before been made in England. It was a simple avowal that on this occasion men were to be regarded, and not measures. No doubt such is the case, and ever has been the case, with the majority of active politicians. The double pleasure of pulling down an opponent, and of raising one's self, is the charm of a politician's life. And by practice this becomes extended to so many branches, that the delights,—and also the disappointments,—are very widespread. Great satisfaction is felt by us because by some lucky conjunction of affairs our man, whom we never saw, is made lord-lieutenant of a county instead of another man, of whom we know as little. It is a great thing to us that Sir Samuel Bobwig, an excellent liberal, is seated high on the bench of justice, instead of that time-serving conservative, Sir Alexander McSilk. Men and not measures are, no doubt, the very life of politics. But then it is not the fashion to say so in public places. Mr. Gresham was determined to introduce that fashion on the present occasion. He did not think very much of Mr. Daubeny's bill. So he told his friends at the Duke's house. The bill was full of faults,

—went too far in one direction, and not far enough in another. It was not difficult to pick holes in the bill. But the sin of sins consisted in this,—that it was to be passed, if passed at all, by the aid of men who would sin against their consciences by each vote they gave in its favour. What but treachery could be expected from an army in which every officer and every private was called upon to fight against his convictions? The meeting passed off without dissension, and it was agreed that the House of Commons should be called upon to reject the Church Bill simply because it was proposed from that side of the House on which the minority was sitting. As there were more than two hundred members present on the occasion, by none of whom were any objections raised, it seemed probable that Mr. Gresham might be successful. There was still, however, doubt in the minds of some men. "It 's all very well," said Mr. Rattler, "but Turnbull was n't there, you know."

But from what took place the next day but one in Park Lane it would almost seem that the Duchess had been there. She came at once to see Madame Goesler, having very firmly determined that the Duke's death should not have the appearance of interrupting her intimacy with her friend. "Was it not very disagreeable,"—asked Madame Goesler,—"just the day you came to town?"

"We did n't think of that at all. One is not allowed to think of anything now. It was very improper, of course, because of the Duke's death;—but that had to be put on one side. And then it was quite contrary to etiquette that peers and commoners should be brought together. I think there was some idea of

making sure of Plantagenet, and so they all came and wore out our carpets. There was n't above a dozen peers; but they were enough to show that all the old landmarks have been upset. I don't think any one would have objected if I had opened the meeting myself, and called upon Mrs. Bonteen to second me."

"Why Mrs. Bonteen?"

"Because next to myself she 's the most talkative and political woman we have. She was at our house yesterday, and I 'm not quite sure that she does n't intend to cut me out."

"We must put her down, Lady Glen."

"Perhaps she 'll put me down now that we 're half shelved. The men did make such a racket, and yet no one seemed to speak for two minutes except Mr. Gresham, who stood upon my pet foot-stool, and kicked it almost to pieces."

"Was Mr. Finn there?"

"Everybody was there, I suppose. What makes you ask particularly about Mr. Finn?"

"Because he 's a friend."

"That 's come up again, has it? He 's the handsome Irishman, is n't he, that came to Matching the same day that brought you there?"

"He is an Irishman, and he was at Matching that day."

"He 's certainly handsome. What a day that was, Marie! When one thinks of it all,—of all the perils and all the salvations, how strange it is! I wonder whether you would have liked it now if you were the Dowager Duchess."

"I should have had some enjoyment, I suppose."

"I don't know that it would have done us any harm,

and yet how keen I was about it. We can't give you the rank now, and you won't take the money."

"Not the money, certainly."

"Plantagenet says you 'll have to take it;—but it seems to me he 's always wrong. There are so many things that one must do that one does n't do. He never perceives that everything gets changed every five years. So Mr. Finn is the favourite again?"

"He is a friend whom I like. I may be allowed to have a friend, I suppose."

"A dozen, my dear;—and all of them good-looking. Good-bye, dear. Pray come to us. Don't stand off and make yourself disagreeable. We shan't be giving dinner-parties, but you can come whenever you please. Tell me at once;—do you mean to be disagreeable?"

Then Madame Goesler was obliged to promise that she would not be more disagreeable than her nature had made her.

CHAPTER V.

THE WORLD BECOMES COLD.

A GREAT deal was said by very many persons in London as to the murderous attack which had been made by Mr. Kennedy on Phineas Finn in Judd Street, but the advice given by Mr. Slide in the People's Banner to the police was not taken. No public or official inquiry was made into the circumstance. Mr. Kennedy, under the care of his cousin, retreated to Scotland; and, as it seemed, there was to be an end of it. Throughout the month of March various smaller bolts were thrust both at Phineas and at the police by the editor of the above-named newspaper, but they seemed to fall without much effect. No one was put in prison; nor was any one ever examined. But, nevertheless, these missiles had their effect. Everybody knew that there had been a "row" between Mr. Kennedy and Phineas Finn, and that the "row" had been made about Mr. Kennedy's wife. Everybody knew that a pistol had been fired at Finn's head; and a great many people thought that there had been some cause for the assault. It was alleged at one club that the present member for Tankerville had spent the greater part of the last two years at Dresden, and at another that he had called on Mr. Kennedy twice, once down in Scotland, and once at the hotel in Judd Street, with a view of inducing that gentleman to concede to a divorce. There was also a very romantic

story afloat as to an engagement which had existed between Lady Laura and Phineas Finn before the lady had been induced by her father to marry the richer suitor. Various details were given in corroboration of these stories. Was it not known that the Earl had purchased the submission of Phineas Finn by a seat for his borough of Loughton? Was it not known that Lord Chiltern, the brother of Lady Laura, had fought a duel with Phineas Finn? Was it not known that Mr. Kennedy himself had been as it were coerced into quiescence by the singular fact that he had been saved from garroters in the street by the opportune interference of Phineas Finn? It was even suggested that the scene with the garroters had been cunningly planned by Phineas Finn, that he might in this way be able to restrain the anger of the husband of the lady whom he loved. All these stories were very pretty; but as the reader, it is hoped, knows, they were all untrue. Phineas had made but one short visit to Dresden in his life. Lady Laura had been engaged to Mr. Kennedy before Phineas had ever spoken to her of his love. The duel with Lord Chiltern had been about another lady, and the seat at Loughton had been conferred upon Phineas chiefly on account of his prowess in extricating Mr. Kennedy from the garroters,—respecting which circumstance it may be said that as the meeting in the street was fortuitous, the reward was greater than the occasion seemed to require.

While all these things were being said Phineas became something of a hero. A man who is supposed to have caused a disturbance between two married people, in a certain rank of life, does generally receive

a certain meed of admiration. A man who was asked out to dinner twice a week before such rumours were afloat would probably receive double that number of invitations afterwards. And then to have been shot at by a madman in a room, and to be the subject of the venom of a People's Banner, tends also to fame. Other ladies besides Madame Goesler were anxious to have the story from the very lips of the hero, and in this way Phineas Finn became a conspicuous man. But fame begets envy, and there were some who said that the member for Tankerville had injured his prospects with his party. It may be very well to give a dinner to a man who has caused the wife of a late Cabinet Minister to quarrel with her husband; but it can hardly be expected that he should be placed in office by the head of the party to which that late Cabinet Minister belonged. "I never saw such a fellow as you are," said Barrington Erle to him. "You are always getting into a mess."

"Nobody ought to know better than you how false all these calumnies are." This he said because Erle and Lady Laura were cousins.

"Of course they are calumnies; but you had heard them before, and what made you go poking your head into the lion's mouth?"

Mr. Bonteen was very much harder upon him than was Barrington Erle. "I never liked him from the first, and always knew he would not run straight. No Irishman ever does." This was said to Viscount Fawn, a distinguished member of the liberal party, who had but lately been married, and was known to have very strict notions as to the bonds of matrimony. He had been heard to say that any man who had in-

terfered with the happiness of a married couple should be held to have committed a capital offence.

"I don't know whether the story about Lady Laura is true."

"Of course it 's true. All the world knows it to be true. He was always there; at Loughlinter, and at Saulsby, and in Portman Square after she had left her husband. The mischief he has done is incalculable. There 's a conservative sitting in poor Kennedy's seat for Dunross-shire."

"That might have been the case anyway."

"Nothing could have turned Kennedy out. Don't you remember how he behaved about the Irish Land Question? I hate such fellows."

"If I thought it true about Lady Laura——"

Lord Fawn was again about to express his opinion in regard to matrimony, but Mr. Bonteen was too impetuous to listen to him. "It 's out of the question that he should come in again. At any rate if he does, I won't. I shall tell Gresham so very plainly. The women will do all that they can for him. They always do for a fellow of that kind."

Phineas heard of it;—not exactly by any repetition of the words that were spoken, but by chance phrases, and from the looks of men. Lord Cantrip, who was his best friend among those who were certain to hold high office in a liberal Government, did not talk to him cheerily,—did not speak as though he, Phineas, would as a matter of course have some place assigned to him. And he thought that Mr. Gresham was hardly as cordial to him as he might be when they met in the closer intercourse of the House. There was always a word or two spoken, and sometimes a shaking of hands.

He had no right to complain. But yet he knew that something was wanting. We can generally read a man's purpose towards us in his manner, if his purposes are of much moment to us.

Phineas had written to Lady Laura, giving her an account of the occurrence in Judd Street, on the 1st of March, and had received from her a short answer by return of post. It contained hardly more than a thanksgiving that his life had not been sacrificed, and in a day or two she had written again, letting him know that she had determined to consult her father. Then on the last day of the month he received the following letter:—

"Dresden, March 27th, 18—.

"My dear Friend,—At last we have resolved that we will go back to England,—almost at once. Things have gone so rapidly that I hardly know how to explain them all, but that is papa's resolution. His lawyer, Mr. Forster, tells him that it will be best, and goes so far as to say that it is imperative on my behalf that some steps should be taken to put an end to the present state of things. I will not scruple to tell you that he is actuated chiefly by considerations as to money. It is astonishing to me that a man who has all his life been so liberal should now in his old age think so much about it. It is, however, in no degree for himself. It is all for me. He cannot bear to think that my position should be withheld from me by Mr. Kennedy while I have done nothing wrong. I was obliged to show him your letter, and what you said about the control of money took hold of his mind at once. He thinks that if my unfortunate husband be insane, there can be no difficulty in my obtaining a

separation on terms which would oblige him or his friends to restore this horrid money.

"Of course I could stay if I chose. Papa would not refuse to find a home for me here. But I do agree with Mr. Forster that something should be done to stop the tongues of ill-conditioned people. The idea of having my name dragged through the newspapers is dreadful to me; but if this must be done one way or the other, it will be better that it should be done with truth. There is nothing that I need fear,—as you know so well.

"I cannot look forward to happiness anywhere. If the question of separation were once settled, I do not know whether I would not prefer returning here to remaining in London. Papa has got tired of the place, and wants, he says, to see Saulsby once again before he dies. What can I say in answer to this, but that I will go? We have sent to have the house in Portman Square got ready for us, and I suppose we shall be there about the 15th of next month. Papa has instructed Mr. Forster to tell Mr. Kennedy's lawyer that we are coming, and he is to find out, if he can, whether any interference in the management of the property has been as yet made by the family. Perhaps I ought to tell you that Mr. Forster has expressed surprise that you did not call on the police when the shot was fired. Of course I can understand it all. God bless you.

"Your affectionate friend,

"L. K."

Phineas was obliged to console himself by reflecting that if she understood him of course that was every-

thing. His first and great duty in the matter had been to her. If in performing that duty he had sacrificed himself, he must bear his undeserved punishment like a man. That he was to be punished he began to perceive too clearly. The conviction that Mr. Daubeny must recede from the Treasury Bench after the coming debate became every day stronger, and within the little inner circles of the liberal party the usual discussions were made as to the ministry which Mr. Gresham would, as a matter of course, be called upon to form. But in these discussions Phineas Finn did not find himself taking an assured and comfortable part. Laurence Fitzgibbon, his countryman,—who in the way of work had never been worth his salt,—was eager, happy, and without a doubt. Others of the old stagers, men who had been going in and out ever since they had been able to get seats in Parliament, stood about in clubs, and in lobbies and chambers of the House, with all that busy, magpie air which is worn only by those who have high hopes of good things to come speedily. Lord Mount Thistle was more sublime and ponderous than ever, though they who best understood the party declared that he would never again be invited to undergo the cares of office. His lordship was one of those terrible political burdens, engendered originally by private friendship or family considerations, which one Minister leaves to another. Sir Gregory Grogram, the great whig lawyer, showed plainly by his manner that he thought himself at last secure of reaching the reward for which he had been struggling all his life; for it was understood by all men who knew anything that Lord Weazeling was not to be asked again to sit on the Woolsack. No better

advocate or effective politician ever lived; but it was supposed that he lacked dignity for the office of first judge in the land. That most of the old lot would come back was a matter of course.

There would be the Duke,—the Duke of St. Bungay, who had for years past been "the Duke" when liberal administrations were discussed, and the same Duke whom we know so well; and Sir Harry Coldfoot, and Legge Wilson, Lord Cantrip, Lord Thrift, and the rest of them. There would of course be Lord Fawn, Mr. Rattler, and Mr. Erle. The thing was so thoroughly settled that one was almost tempted to think that the Prime Minister himself would have no voice in the selections to be made. As to one office it was acknowledged on all sides that a doubt existed which would at last be found to be very injurious,—as some thought altogether crushing,—to the party. To whom would Mr. Gresham entrust the financial affairs of the country? Who would be the new Chancellor of the Exchequer? There were not a few who inferred that Mr. Bonteen would be promoted to that high office. During the last two years he had devoted himself to decimal coinage with a zeal only second to that displayed by Plantagenet Palliser, and was accustomed to say of himself that he had almost perished under his exertions. It was supposed that he would have the support of the present Duke of Omnium,—and that Mr. Gresham, who disliked the man, would be coerced by the fact that there was no other competitor. That Mr. Bonteen should go into the Cabinet would be gall and wormwood to many brother liberals; but gall and wormwood such as this have to be swallowed. The rising in life of our family friends is, perhaps, the

bitterest morsel of the bitter bread which we are called upon to eat in life. But we do eat it; and after a while it becomes food to us,—when we find ourselves able to use, on behalf perhaps, of our children, the influence of those whom we had once hoped to leave behind in the race of life. When a man suddenly shoots up into power few suffer from it very acutely. The rise of a Pitt can have caused no heart-burning. But Mr. Bonteen had been a hack among the hacks, had filled the usual half-a-dozen places, had been a junior lord, a vice-president, a deputy controller, a chief commissioner, and a joint secretary. His hopes had been raised or abased among the places of £1,000, £1,200, or £1,500 a year. He had hitherto culminated at £2,000, and had been supposed with diligence to have worked himself up to the top of the ladder, as far as the ladder was accessible to him. And now he was spoken of in connection with one of the highest offices of the State! Of course this created much uneasiness, and gave rise to many prophecies of failure. But in the midst of it all no office was assigned to Phineas Finn; and there was a general feeling, not expressed, but understood, that his affair with Mr. Kennedy stood in his way.

Quintus Slide had undertaken to crush him! Could it be possible that so mean a man should be able to make good so monstrous a threat? The man was very mean, and the threat had been absurd as well as monstrous; and yet it seemed that it might be realised. Phineas was too proud to ask questions, even of Barrington Erle, but he felt that he was being "left out in the cold," because the editor of the People's Banner had said that no Government could employ him; and

at this moment, on the very morning of the day which was to usher in the great debate, which was to be so fatal to Mr. Daubeny and his Church Reform, another thunderbolt was hurled. The "we" of the People's Banner had learned that the very painful matter, to which they had been compelled by a sense of duty to call the public attention in reference to the late member for Dunross-shire and the present member for Tankerville, would be brought before one of the tribunals of the country, in reference to the matrimonial differences between Mr. Kennedy and his wife. It would be in the remembrance of their readers that the unfortunate gentleman had been provoked to fire a pistol at the head of the member for Tankerville,—a circumstance which, though publicly known, had never been brought under the notice of the police. There was reason to hope that the mystery might now be cleared up, and that the ends of justice would demand that a certain document should be produced, which they,—the "we,"—had been vexatiously restrained from giving to their readers, although it had been most carefully prepared for publication in the columns of the People's Banner. Then the thunderbolt went on to say that there was evidently a great move among the members of the so-called liberal party, who seemed to think that it was only necessary that they should open their mouths wide enough in order that the sweets of office should fall into them. The "we" were quite of a different opinion. The "we" believed that no Minister for many a long day had been so firmly fixed on the Treasury Bench as was Mr. Daubeny at the present moment. But this at any rate might be inferred;—that should Mr. Gresham by any unhappy

combination of circumstances be called upon to form a ministry, it would be quite impossible for him to include within it the name of the member for Tankerville. This was the second great thunderbolt that fell, and so did the work of crushing our poor friend proceed.

There was great injustice in all this; at least so Phineas thought;—injustice, not only from the hands of Mr. Slide, who was unjust as a matter of course, but also from those who ought to have been his staunch friends. He had been enticed over to England almost with a promise of office, and he was sure that he had done nothing which deserved punishment, or even censure. He could not condescend to complain,—nor indeed as yet could he say that there was ground for complaint. Nothing had been done to him. Not a word had been spoken,—except those lying words in the newspapers which he was too proud to notice. On one matter, however, he was determined to be firm. When Barrington Erle had absolutely insisted that he should vote upon the Church Bill in opposition to all that he had said upon the subject at Tankerville, he had stipulated that he should have an opportunity in the great debate which would certainly take place of explaining his conduct,—or, in other words, that the privilege of making a speech should be accorded to him at a time in which very many members would no doubt attempt to speak and would attempt in vain. It may be imagined,—probably still is imagined by a great many,—that no such pledge as this could be given, that the right to speak depends simply on the Speaker's eye, and that energy at the moment in attracting attention would alone be of account to an eager orator. But Phineas knew the House too well to trust to such

a theory. That some preliminary assistance would be given to the travelling of the Speaker's eye, in so important a debate, he knew very well; and he knew also that a promise from Barrington Erle or from Mr. Rattler would be his best security. "That will be all right, of course," said Barrington Erle to him on the evening of the day before the debate; "we have quite counted on your speaking." There had been a certain sullenness in the tone with which Phineas had asked his question as though he had been labouring under a grievance, and he felt himself rebuked by the cordiality of the reply. "I suppose we had better fix it for Monday or Tuesday," said the other. "We hope to get it over by Tuesday, but there is no knowing. At any rate you shan't be thrown over." It was almost on his tongue,—the entire story of his grievance, the expression of his feeling that he was not being treated as one of the chosen; but he restrained himself. He liked Barrington Erle well enough, but not so well as to justify him in asking for sympathy.

Nor had it been his wont in any of the troubles of his life to ask for sympathy from a man. He had always gone to some woman;—in old days to Lady Laura, or to Violet Effingham, or to Madame Goesler. By them he could endure to be petted, praised, or upon occasion even pitied. But pity or praise from any man had been distasteful to him. On the morning of the 1st of April he again went to Park Lane, not with any formed plan of telling the lady of his wrongs, but driven by a feeling that he wanted comfort, which might perhaps be found there. The lady received him very kindly, and at once inquired as to the great political tournament which was about to be

commenced. "Yes; we begin to-day," said Phineas. "Mr. Daubeny will speak, I should say, from half-past four till seven. I wonder you don't go and hear him."

"What a pleasure! To hear a man speak for two hours and a half about the Church of England. One must be very hard driven for amusement! Will you tell me that you like it?"

"I like to hear a good speech."

"But you have the excitement before you of making a good speech in answer. You are in the fight. A poor woman, shut up in a cage, feels there more acutely than anywhere else how insignificant a position she fills in the world."

"You don't advocate the rights of women, Madame Goesler."

"Oh no. Knowing our inferiority, I submit without a grumble; but I am not sure that I care to go and listen to the squabbles of my masters. You may arrange it all among you, and I will accept what you do, whether it be good or bad,—as I must; but I cannot take so much interest in the proceeding as to spend my time in listening where I cannot speak, and in looking when I cannot be seen. You will speak?"

"Yes; I think so."

"I shall read your speech, which is more than I shall do for most of the others. And when it is all over, will your turn come?"

"Not mine individually, Madame Goesler."

"But it will be yours individually;—will it not?" she asked with energy. Then gradually, with half-pronounced sentences, he explained to her that even in the event of the formation of a liberal Government,

he did not expect that any place would be offered to him. "And why not? We have been all speaking of it as a certainty."

He longed to inquire who were the all of whom she spoke, but he could not do it without an egotism which would be distasteful to him. "I can hardly tell;—but I don't think I shall be asked to join them."

"You would wish it?"

"Yes;—talking to you I do not see why I should hesitate to say so."

"Talking to me, why should you hesitate to say anything about yourself that is true? I can hold my tongue. I do not gossip about my friends. Whose doing is it?"

"I do not know that it is any man's doing."

"But it must be. Everybody said that you were to be one of them if you could get the other people out. Is it Mr. Bonteen?"

"Likely enough. Not that I know anything of the kind; but as I hate him from the bottom of my heart, it is natural to suppose that he has the same feeling in regard to me."

"I agree with you there."

"But I don't know that it comes from any feeling of that kind."

"What does it come from?"

"You have heard all the calumny about Lady Laura Kennedy."

"You do not mean to say that a story such as that has affected your position."

"I fancy it has. But you must not suppose, Madame Goesler, that I mean to complain. A man must take these things as they come. No one has received more

kindness from friends than I have, and few perhaps more favours from fortune. All this about Mr. Kennedy has been unlucky,—but it cannot be helped."

"Do you mean to say that the morals of your party will be offended?" said Madame Goesler, almost laughing.

"Lord Fawn, you know, is very particular. In sober earnest, one cannot tell how these things operate; but they do operate gradually. One's friends are sometimes very glad of an excuse for not befriending one."

"Lady Laura is coming home?"

"Yes."

"That will put an end to it."

"There is nothing to put an end to except the foul-mouthed malice of a lying newspaper. Nobody believes anything against Lady Laura."

"I 'm not so sure of that. I believe nothing against her."

"I 'm sure you do not, Madame Goesler. Nor do I think that anybody does. It is too absurd for belief from beginning to end. Good-bye. Perhaps I shall see her when the debate is over."

"Of course you will. Good-bye, and success to your oratory." Then Madame Goesler resolved that she would say a few judicious words to her friend, the Duchess, respecting Phineas Finn.

CHAPTER VI.

THE TWO GLADIATORS.

The great debate was commenced with all the solemnities which are customary on such occasions, and which make men think for the day that no moment of greater excitement has ever blessed or cursed the country. Upon the present occasion London was full of clergymen. The specially clerical clubs,—the Oxford and Cambridge, the Old University, and the Athenæum,—were black with them. The bishops and deans, as usual, were pleasant in their manner and happy-looking, in spite of adverse circumstances. When one sees a bishop in the hours of the distress of the Church, one always thinks of the just and firm man who will stand fearless while the ruins of the world are falling about his ears. But the parsons from the country were a sorry sight to see. They were in earnest with all their hearts, and did believe,—not that the crack of doom was coming, which they could have borne with equanimity if convinced that their influence would last to the end,—but that the Evil One was to be made welcome upon the earth by act of Parliament. It is out of nature that any man should think it good that his own order should be repressed, curtailed, and deprived of its power. If we go among cab-drivers or letter-carriers, among butlers or gamekeepers, among tailors or butchers, among farmers or graziers, among doctors or attorneys, we shall find in each set of men a con-

viction that the welfare of the community depends upon the firmness with which they,—especially they,—hold their own. This is so manifestly true with the Bar that no barrister in practice scruples to avow that barristers in practice are the salt of the earth. The personal confidence of a judge in his own position is beautiful, being salutary to the country, though not unfrequently damaging to the character of the man. But if this be so with men who are conscious of no higher influence than that exercised over the bodies and minds of their fellow-creatures, how much stronger must be the feeling when the influence affects the soul! To the outsider, or layman, who simply uses a cab, or receives a letter, or goes to law, or has to be tried, these pretensions are ridiculous or annoying, according to the ascendancy of the pretender, at the moment. But as the clerical pretensions are more exacting than all others, being put forward with an assertion that no answer is possible without breach of duty and sin, so are they more galling. The fight has been going on since the idea of a mitre first entered the heart of a priest,—since dominion in this world has found itself capable of sustentation by the exercise of fear as to the world to come. We do believe,—the majority among us does so,—that if we live and die in sin we shall after some fashion come to great punishment, and we believe also that by having pastors among us who shall be men of God, we may best aid ourselves and our children in avoiding this bitter end. But then the pastors and men of God can only be human,—cannot be altogether men of God; and so they have oppressed us, and burned us, and tortured us, and hence come to love palaces, and fine linen, and purple, and, alas,

sometimes, mere luxury and idleness. The torturing and the burning, as also, to speak truth, the luxury and the idleness, have, among us, been already conquered, but the idea of ascendancy remains. What is a thoughtful man to do who acknowledges the danger of his soul, but cannot swallow his parson whole simply because he has been sent to him from some source in which he has no special confidence, perhaps by some distant lord, perhaps by a Lord Chancellor whose political friend has had a son with a tutor? What is he to do when, in spite of some fine linen and purple left among us, the provision for the man of God in his parish or district is so poor that no man of God fitted to teach him will come and take it? In no spirit of animosity to religion he begins to tell himself that Church and State together was a monkish combination, fit perhaps for monkish days, but no longer having fitness, and not much longer capable of existence in this country. But to the parson himself,—to the honest, hardworking, conscientious priest who does in his heart of hearts believe that no diminution in the general influence of his order can be made without ruin to the souls of men,—this opinion, when it becomes dominant, is as though the world were in truth breaking to pieces over his head. The world has been broken to pieces in the same way often;—but extreme chaos does not come. The cabman and the letter-carrier always expect that chaos will very nearly come when they are disturbed. The barristers are sure of chaos when the sanctity of benchers is in question. What utter chaos would be promised to us could any one with impunity contemn the majesty of the House of Commons! But of all these chaoses there can be

no chaos equal to that which in the mind of a zealous Oxford-bred constitutional country parson must attend that annihilation of his special condition which will be produced by the disestablishment of the Church. Of all good fellows he is the best good fellow. He is genial, hospitable, well-educated, and always has either a pretty wife or pretty daughters. But he has so extreme a belief in himself that he cannot endure to be told that absolute chaos will not come at once if he be disturbed. And now disturbances,—ay, and utter dislocation and ruin, were to come from the hands of a friend! Was it wonderful that parsons should be seen about Westminster in flocks with "Et tu, Brute!" written on their faces as plainly as the law on the brows of a Pharisee?

The Speaker had been harassed for orders. The powers and prowess of every individual member had been put to the test. The galleries were crowded. Ladies' places had been ballotted for with desperate enthusiasm, in spite of the sarcasm against the House which Madame Goesler had expressed. Two royal princes and a royal duke were accommodated within the House in an irregular manner. Peers swarmed in the passages, and were too happy to find standing-room. Bishops jostled against lay barons with no other preference than that afforded to them by their broader shoulders. Men, and especially clergymen, came to the galleries loaded with sandwiches and flasks, prepared to hear all there was to be heard should the debate last from 4 P.M. to the same hour on the following morning. At two in the afternoon the entrances to the House were barred, and men of all ranks—deans, prebends, peers, sons,—and baronets, stood there

patiently waiting till some powerful nobleman should let them through. The very ventilating chambers under the House were filled with courteous listeners, who had all pledged themselves that under no possible provocation would they even cough during the debate.

A few minutes after four, in a House from which hardly more than a dozen members were absent, Mr. Daubeny took his seat with that air of affected indifference to things around him which is peculiar to him. He entered slowly, amidst cheers from his side of the House, which no doubt were loud in proportion to the dismay of the cheerers as to the matter in hand. Gentlemen lacking substantial sympathy with their leader found it to be comfortable to deceive themselves, and raise their hearts at the same time by the easy enthusiasm of noise. Mr. Daubeny having sat down and covered his head, just raised his hat from his brows, and then tried to look as though he were no more than any other gentleman present. But the peculiar consciousness of the man displayed itself even in his constrained absence of motion. You could see that he felt himself to be the beheld of all beholders, and that he enjoyed the position,—with some slight inward trepidation lest the effort to be made should not equal the greatness of the occasion. Immediately after him Mr. Gresham bustled up the centre of the House amidst a roar of good-humoured welcome. We have had many Ministers who have been personally dearer to their individual adherents in the House than the present leader of the opposition and late premier, but none, perhaps, who has been more generally respected by his party for earnestness and sincerity. On the present occasion there was a fierceness, almost a

ferocity, in his very countenance, to the fire of which friends and enemies were equally anxious to add fuel, —the friends in order that so might these recreant tories be more thoroughly annihilated, and the enemies, that their enemy's indiscretion might act back upon himself to his confusion. For, indeed, it never could be denied that as a Prime Minister Mr. Gresham could be very indiscreet.

A certain small amount of ordinary business was done, to the disgust of expectant strangers, which was as trivial as possible in its nature,—so arranged, apparently, that the importance of what was to follow might be enhanced by the force of contrast. And, to make the dismay of the novice stranger more thorough, questions were asked and answers were given in so low a voice, and Mr. Speaker uttered a word or two in so quick and shambling a fashion, that he, the novice stranger, began to fear that no word of the debate would reach him up there in his crowded back seat. All this, however, occupied but a few minutes, and at twenty minutes past four Mr. Daubeny was on his legs. Then the novice stranger found that, though he could not see Mr. Daubeny without the aid of an opera glass, he could hear every word that fell from his lips.

Mr. Daubeny began by regretting the hardness of his position, in that he must, with what thoroughness he might be able to achieve, apply himself to two great subjects, whereas the right honourable gentleman opposite had already declared, with all the formality which could be made to attach itself to a combined meeting of peers and commoners, that he would confine himself strictly to one. The subject selected by the right honourable gentleman opposite on the present

occasion was not the question of Church Reform. The right honourable gentleman had pledged himself with an almost sacred enthusiasm to ignore that subject altogether. No doubt it was the question before the House, and he, himself,—the present speaker,—must unfortunately discuss it at some length. The right honourable gentleman opposite would not, on this great occasion, trouble himself with anything of so little moment. And it might be presumed that the political followers of the right honourable gentleman would be equally reticent, as they were understood to have accepted his tactics without a dissentient voice. He, Mr. Daubeny, was the last man in England to deny the importance of the question which the right honourable gentleman would select for discussions in preference to that of the condition of the Church. The question was a very simple one, and might be put to the House in a few words. Coming from the mouth of the right honourable gentleman, the proposition would probably be made in this form:—"That this House does think that I ought to be Prime Minister now, and as long as I may possess a seat in this House." It was impossible to deny the importance of that question; but perhaps he, Mr. Daubeny, might be justified in demurring to the preference given to it over every other matter, let that matter be of what importance it might to the material welfare of the country.

He made his point well; but he made it too often. And an attack of that kind, personal and savage in its nature, loses its effect when it is evident that the words have been prepared. A good deal may be done in dispute by calling a man an ass or a knave,—but the resolve to use the words should have been made only at

the moment, and they should come hot from the heart. There was much neatness and some acuteness in Mr. Daubeny's satire, but there was no heat, and it was prolix. It had, however, the effect of irritating Mr. Gresham,—as was evident from the manner in which he moved his hat and shuffled his feet.

A man destined to sit conspicuously on our Treasury Bench, or on the seat opposite to it, should ask the gods for a thick skin as a first gift. The need of this in our national assembly is greater than elsewhere, because the differences between the men opposed to each other are smaller. When two foes meet together in the same chamber, one of whom advocates the personal government of an individual ruler, and the other that form of State which has come to be called a red republic, they deal, no doubt, weighty blows of oratory to each other, but blows which never hurt at the moment. They may cut each other's throats if they can find an opportunity; but they do not bite each other like dogs over a bone. But when opponents are almost in accord, as is always the case with our parliamentary gladiators, they are ever striving to give maddening little wounds through the joints of the harness. What is there with us to create the divergence necessary for debate but the pride of personal skill in the encounter? Who desires among us to put down the Queen, or to repudiate the national debt, or to destroy religious worship, or even to disturb the ranks of society? When some small measure of reform has thoroughly recommended itself to the country,—so thoroughly that all men know that the country will have it,—then the question arises whether its details shall be arranged by the political party which calls itself liberal,—or by that which is termed conserv-

ative. The men are so near to each other in all their convictions and theories of life that nothing is left to them but personal competition for the doing of the thing that is to be done. It is the same in religion. The apostle of Christianity and the infidel can meet without a chance of a quarrel; but it is never safe to bring together two men who differ about a saint or a surplice.

Mr. Daubeny, having thus attacked and wounded his enemy, rushed boldly into the question of Church Reform, taking no little pride to himself and to his party that so great a blessing should be bestowed upon the country from so unexpected a source. "See what we conservatives can do. In fact we will conserve nothing when we find that you do not desire to have it conserved any longer. 'Quo nimium reris Graiâ pandetur ab urbe.'" It was exactly the reverse of the complaint which Mr. Gresham was about to make. On the subject of the Church itself he was rather misty but very profound. He went into the question of very early Churches indeed, and spoke of the misappropriation of endowments in the time of Eli. The establishment of the Levites had been no doubt complete; but changes had been effected as circumstances required. He was presumed to have alluded to the order of Melchisedek, but he abstained from any mention of the name. He roamed very wide, and gave many of his hearers an idea that his erudition had carried him into regions in which it was impossible to follow him. The gist of his argument was to show that audacity in reform was the very backbone of conservatism. By a clearly pronounced disunion of Church and State the theocracy of Thomas à Becket would be restored, and the people of England would soon again become the

faithful flocks of faithful shepherds. By taking away the endowments from the parishes, and giving them back in some complicated way to the country, the parishes would be better able than ever to support their clergymen. Bishops would be bishops indeed, when they were no longer the creatures of a Minister's breath. As to the deans, not seeing a clear way to satisfy aspirants for future vacancies in the deaneries, he became more than usually vague, but seemed to imply that the bill which was now with the leave of the House to be read a second time contained no clause forbidding the appointment of deans, though the special stipend of the office must be matter of consideration with the new Church synod.

The details of this part of his speech were felt to be dull by the strangers. As long as he would abuse Mr. Gresham, men could listen with pleasure; and could keep their attention fixed while he referred to the general conservatism of the party which he had the honour of leading. There was a raciness in the promise of so much Church destruction from the chosen leader of the Church party, which was assisted by a conviction in the minds of most men that it was impossible for unfortunate conservatives to refuse to follow this leader, let him lead where he might. There was a gratification in feeling that the country party was bound to follow, even should he take them into the very bowels of a mountain, as the pied piper did the children of Hamelin;—and this made listening pleasant. But when Mr. Daubeny stated the effect of his different clauses, explaining what was to be taken and what left,—with a fervent assurance that what was to be left would, under the altered circumstances, go much further than the

whole had gone before,—then the audience became weary, and began to think that it was time that some other gentleman should be upon his legs. But at the end of the Minister's speech there was another touch of invective which went far to redeem him. He returned to that personal question to which his adversary had undertaken to confine himself, and expressed a holy horror at the political doctrine which was implied. He, during a prolonged parliamentary experience, had encountered much factious opposition. He would even acknowledge that he had seen it exercised on both sides of the House, though he had always striven to keep himself free from its baneful influence. But never till now had he known a statesman proclaim his intention of depending upon faction, and upon faction alone, for the result which he desired to achieve. Let the right honourable gentleman raise a contest on either the principles or the details of the measure, and he would be quite content to abide the decision of the House; but he should regard such a raid as that threatened against him and his friends by the right honourable gentleman as unconstitutional, revolutionary, and tyrannical. He felt sure that an opposition so based, and so maintained, even if it be enabled by the heated feelings of the moment to obtain an unfortunate success in the House, would not be encouraged by the sympathy and support of the country at large. By these last words he was understood to signify that should he be beaten on the second reading, not in reference to the merits of the bill, but simply on the issue as proposed by Mr. Gresham, he would again dissolve the House before he would resign. Now it was very well understood that there were liberal mem-

bers in the House who would prefer even the success of Mr. Daubeny to a speedy reappearance before their constituents.

Mr. Daubeny spoke till nearly eight, and it was surmised at the time that he had craftily arranged his oratory so as to embarrass his opponent. The House had met at four, and was to sit continuously till it was adjourned for the night. When this is the case, gentlemen who speak about eight o'clock are too frequently obliged to address themselves to empty benches. On the present occasion it was Mr. Gresham's intention to follow his opponent at once, instead of waiting, as is usual with a leader of his party, to the close of the debate. It was understood that Mr. Gresham would follow Mr. Daubeny, with the object of making a distinct charge against Ministers, so that the vote on this second reading of the Church Bill might in truth be a vote of want of confidence. But to commence his speech at eight o'clock, when the House was hungry and uneasy, would be a trial. Had Mr. Daubeny closed an hour sooner there would, with a little stretching of the favoured hours, have been time enough. Members would not have objected to postpone their dinner till half-past eight, or perhaps nine, when their favourite orator was on his legs. But with Mr. Gresham beginning a great speech at eight, dinner would altogether become doubtful, and the disaster might be serious. It was not probable that Mr. Daubeny had even among his friends proclaimed any such strategy; but it was thought by the political speculators of the day that such an idea had been present to his mind.

But Mr. Gresham was not to be turned from his purpose. He waited for a few moments, and then rose

and addressed the Speaker. A few members left the House;—gentlemen, doubtless, whose constitutions, weakened by previous service, could not endure prolonged fasting. Some who had nearly reached the door returned to their seats, mindful of Messrs. Roby and Rattler. But for the bulk of those assembled the interest of the moment was greater even than the love of dinner. Some of the peers departed, and it was observed that a bishop or two left the House; but among the strangers in the gallery, hardly a foot of space was gained. He who gave up his seat then, gave it up for the night.

Mr. Gresham began with a calmness of tone which seemed almost to be affected, but which arose from a struggle on his own part to repress that superabundant energy of which he was only too conscious. But the calmness soon gave place to warmth, which heated itself into violence before he had been a quarter of an hour upon his legs. He soon became even ferocious in his invective, and said things so bitter that he had himself no conception of their bitterness. There was this difference between the two men,—that whereas Mr. Daubeny hit always as hard as he knew how to hit, having premeditated each blow, and weighed its results beforehand, having calculated his power even to the effect of a blow repeated on a wound already given, Mr. Gresham struck right and left and straightforward with a readiness engendered by practice, and in his fury might have murdered his antagonist before he was aware that he had drawn blood. He began by refusing absolutely to discuss the merits of the bill. The right honourable gentleman had prided himself on his generosity as a Greek. He would remind the right

honourable gentleman that presents from Greeks had ever been considered dangerous. "It is their gifts, and only their gifts, that we fear," he said. The political gifts of the right honourable gentlemen, extracted by him from his unwilling colleagues and followers, had always been more bitter to the taste than Dead Sea apples. That such gifts should not be bestowed on the country by unwilling hands, that reform should not come from those who themselves felt the necessity of no reform, he believed to be the wish not only of that House, but of the country at large. Would any gentleman on that bench, excepting the right honourable gentleman himself,—and he pointed to the crowded phalanx of the Government,—get up and declare that this measure of Church Reform, this severance of Church and State, was brought forward in consonance with his own long-cherished political conviction? He accused that party of being so bound to the chariot wheels of the right honourable gentleman, as to be unable to abide by their own convictions. And as to the right honourable gentleman himself, he would appeal to his followers opposite to say whether the right honourable gentleman was possessed of any one strong political conviction.

He had been accused of being unconstitutional, revolutionary, and tyrannical. If the House would allow him he would very shortly explain his idea of constitutional government as carried on in this country. It was based and built on majorities in that House, and supported solely by that power. There could be no constitutional government in this country that was not so maintained. Any other government must be both revolutionary and tyrannical. Any other government

was a usurpation; and he would make bold to tell the right honourable gentleman that a Minister in this country who should recommend Her Majesty to trust herself to advisers not supported by a majority of the House of Commons, would plainly be guilty of usurping the powers of the State. He threw from him with disdain the charge which had been brought against himself of hankering after the sweets of office. He indulged and gloried in indulging the highest ambition of an English subject. But he gloried much more in the privileges and power of that House, within the walls of which was centred all that was salutary, all that was efficacious, all that was stable in the political constitution of his country. It had been his pride to have acted during nearly all his political life with that party which had commanded a majority, but he would defy his most bitter adversary, he would defy the right honourable gentleman himself, to point to any period of his career in which he had been unwilling to succumb to a majority when he himself had belonged to the minority.

He himself would regard the vote on this occasion as a vote of want of confidence. He took the line he was now taking because he desired to bring the House to a decision on that question. He himself had not that confidence in the right honourable gentleman which would justify him in accepting a measure on so important a subject as the union or severance of Church and State from his hands. Should the majority of the House differ from him and support the second reading of the bill, he would at once so far succumb as to give his best attention to the clauses of the bill, and endeavour with the assistance of those gentlemen

who acted with him to make it suitable to the wants of the country by omissions and additions as the clauses should pass through committee. But before doing that he would ask the House to decide with all its solemnity and all its weight whether it was willing to accept from the hands of the right honourable gentleman any measure of reform on a matter so important as this now before them. It was nearly ten when he sat down; and then the stomach of the House could stand it no longer, and an adjournment at once took place.

On the next morning it was generally considered that Mr. Daubeny had been too long and Mr. Gresham too passionate. There were some who declared that Mr. Gresham had never been finer than when he described the privileges of the House of Commons; and others who thought that Mr. Daubeny's lucidity had been marvellous; but in this case, as in most others, the speeches of the day were generally thought to have been very inferior to the great efforts of the past.

CHAPTER VII.

THE UNIVERSE.

BEFORE the House met again, the quidnuncs about the clubs, on both sides of the question, had determined that Mr. Gresham's speech, whether good or not as an effort of oratory, would serve its intended purpose. He would be backed by a majority of votes, and it might have been very doubtful whether such would have been the case had he attempted to throw out the bill on its merits. Mr. Rattler, by the time that prayers had been read, had become almost certain of success. There were very few liberals in the House who were not anxious to declare by their votes that they had no confidence in Mr. Daubeny. Mr. Turnbull, the great radical, and perhaps some two dozen with him, would support the second reading, declaring that they could not reconcile it with their consciences to record a vote in favour of a union of Church and State. On all such occasions as the present, Mr. Turnbull was sure to make himself disagreeable to those who sat near to him in the House. He was a man who thought that so much was demanded of him in order that his independence might be doubted by none. It was nothing to him, he was wont to say, who called himself Prime Minister, or Secretary here, or President there. But then there would be quite as much of this independence on the conservative as on the liberal side of the House. Surely there would be more than two

dozen gentlemen who would be true enough to the cherished principles of their whole lives to vote against such a bill as this! It was the fact that there were so very few so true which added such a length to the faces of the country parsons. Six months ago not a country gentleman in England would have listened to such a proposition without loud protests as to its revolutionary wickedness. And now, under the sole pressure of one man's authority, the subject had become so common that men were assured that the thing would be done even though of all things that could be done it were the worst. "It is no good any longer having any opinion upon anything," one person said to another, as they sat together at their club with their newspapers in their hands. "Nothing frightens any one,—no infidelity, no wickedness, no revolution. All reverence is at end, and the Holy of Holies is no more even to the worshipper than the threshold of the Temple." Though it became known that the bill would be lost, what comfort was there in that, when the battle was to be won, not by the chosen Israelites to whom the Church with all its appurtenances ought to be dear, but by a crew of Philistines who would certainly follow the lead of their opponents in destroying the holy structure?

On the Friday the debate was continued with much life on the ministerial side of the House. It was very easy for them to cry Faction! Faction! and hardly necessary for them to do more. A few parrot words had been learned as to the expediency of fitting the great and increasing Church of England to the growing necessity of the age. That the CHURCH OF ENGLAND would still be the CHURCH OF ENGLAND was re-

peated till weary listeners were sick of the unmeaning words. But the zeal of the combatants was displayed on that other question. Faction was now the avowed weapon of the leaders of the so-called liberal side of the House, and it was very easy to denounce the new doctrine. Every word that Mr. Gresham had spoken was picked in pieces, and the enormity of his theory was exhibited. He had boldly declared to them that they were to regard men and not measures, and they were to show by their votes whether they were prepared to accept such teaching. The speeches were, of course, made by alternate orators, but the firing from the conservative benches was on this evening much the louder.

It would have seemed that with such an issue between them they might almost have consented to divide after the completion of the two great speeches. The course on which they were to run had been explained to them, and it was not probable that any member's intention as to his running would now be altered by anything that he might hear. Mr. Turnbull's two dozen defaulters were all known, and the two dozen and four true conservatives were known also. But, nevertheless, a great many members were anxious to speak. It would be the great debate of the session, and the subject to be handled,—that, namely, of the general merits and demerits of the two political parties,—was wide and very easy. On that night it was past one o'clock when Mr. Turnbull adjourned the House.

"I 'm afraid we must put you off till Tuesday," Mr. Rattler said on the Sunday afternoon to Phineas Finn.

"I have no objection at all, so long as I get a fair place on that day."

"There shan't be a doubt about that. Gresham

particularly wants you to speak, because you are pledged to a measure of disestablishment. You can insist on his own views,—that even should such a measure be essentially necessary——"

"Which I think it is," said Phineas.

"Still it should not be accepted from the old Church-and-State party."

There was something pleasant in this to Phineas Finn,—something that made him feel for the moment that he had perhaps mistaken the bearing of his friend towards him. "We are sure of a majority, I suppose," he said.

"Absolutely sure," said Rattler. "I begin to think it will amount to half a hundred,—perhaps more."

"What will Daubeny do?"

"Go out. He can't do anything else. His pluck is certainly wonderful, but even with his pluck he can't dissolve again. His Church Bill has given him a six months' run, and six months is something."

"Is it true that Grogram is to be Chancellor?" Phineas asked the question, not from any particular solicitude as to the prospects of Sir Gregory Grogram, but because he was anxious to hear whether Mr. Rattler would speak to him with anything of the cordiality of fellowship respecting the new Government. But Mr. Rattler became at once discreet and close, and said that he did not think that anything as yet was known as to the Woolsack. Then Phineas retreated again within his shell, with a certainty that nothing would be done for him.

And yet to whom could this question of place be of such vital importance as it was to him? He had come back to his old haunts from Ireland, abandoning alto-

gether the pleasant safety of an assured income, buoyed by the hope of office. He had, after a fashion, made his calculations. In the present disposition of the country it was, he thought, certain that the liberal party must, for the next twenty years, have longer periods of power than their opponents; and he had thought also that were he in the House, some place would eventually be given to him. He had been in office before, and had been especially successful. He knew that it had been said of him that of the young debutants of latter years he had been the best. He had left his party by opposing them; but he had done so without creating any ill-will among the leaders of his party,—in a manner that had been regarded as highly honourable to him, and on departing had received expressions of deep regret from Mr. Gresham himself. When Barrington Erle had wanted him to return to his old work, his own chief doubt had been about the seat. But he had been bold and had adventured all, and had succeeded. There had been some little trouble about those pledges given at Tankerville, but he would be able to turn them even to the use of his party. It was quite true that nothing had been promised him; but Erle, when he had written, bidding him to come over from Ireland, must have intended him to understand that he would be again enrolled in the favoured regiment, should he be able to show himself as the possessor of a seat in the House. And yet,—yet he felt convinced that when the day should come it would be to him a day of disappointment, and that when the list should appear, his name would not be on it. Madame Goesler had suggested to him that Mr. Bonteen might be his enemy, and he had replied by stating that he

himself hated Mr. Bonteen. He now remembered that Mr. Bonteen had hardly spoken to him since his return to London, though there had not in fact been any quarrel between them. In this condition of mind he longed to speak openly to Barrington Erle, but he was restrained by a feeling of pride, and a still existing idea that no candidate for office, let his claim be what it might, should ask for a place. On that Sunday evening he saw Bonteen at the club. Men were going in and out with that feverish excitement which always prevails on the eve of a great parliamentary change. A large majority against the Government was considered to be certain; but there was an idea abroad that Mr. Daubeny had some scheme in his head by which to confute the immediate purport of his enemies. There was nothing to which the audacity of the man was not equal. Some said that he would dissolve the House, —which had hardly yet been six months sitting. Others were of opinion that he would simply resolve not to vacate his place,—thus defying the majority of the House and all the ministerial traditions of the country. Words had fallen from him which made some men certain that such was his intention. That it should succeed ultimately was impossible. The whole country would rise against him. Supplies would be refused. In every detail of Government he would be impeded. But then,—such was the temper of the man,—it was thought that all these horrors would not deter him. There would be a blaze and a confusion, in which timid men would doubt whether the Constitution would be burned to tinder or only illuminated; but that blaze and that confusion would be dear to Mr. Daubeny if he could stand as the centre figure,—

the great pyrotechnist who did it all, red from head to foot with the glare of the squibs with which his own hands were filling all the spaces. The anticipation that some such display might take place made men busy and eager; so that on that Sunday evening they roamed about from one place of meeting to another, instead of sitting at home with their wives and daughters. There was at this time existing a small club,—so called though unlike other clubs,—which had entitled itself the Universe. The name was supposed to be a joke, as it was limited to ninety-nine members. It was domiciled in one simple and somewhat mean apartment. It was kept open only one hour before and one hour after midnight, and that only on two nights of the week, and that only when Parliament was sitting. Its attractions were not numerous, consisting chiefly of tobacco and tea. The conversation was generally listless and often desultory; and occasionally there would arise the great and terrible evil of a punster whom every one hated but no one had life enough to put down. But the thing had been a success, and men liked to be members of the Universe. Mr. Bonteen was a member, and so was Phineas Finn. On this Sunday evening the club was open, and Phineas, as he entered the room, perceived that his enemy was seated alone on a corner of a sofa. Mr. Bonteen was not a man who loved to be alone in public places, and was apt rather to make one of congregations, affecting popularity, and always at work increasing his influence. But on this occasion his own greatness had probably isolated him. If it were true that he was to be the new Chancellor of the Exchequer,—to ascend from demi-godhead to the perfect divinity of the Cabinet,—

and to do so by a leap which would make him high even among first-class gods, it might be well for himself to look to himself and choose new congregations. Or, at least, it would be becoming that he should be chosen now instead of being a chooser. He was one who could weigh to the last ounce the importance of his position, and make most accurate calculations as to the effect of his intimacies. On that very morning Mr. Gresham had suggested to him that in the event of a liberal Government being formed, he should hold the high office in question. This, perhaps, had not been done in the most flattering manner, as Mr. Gresham had deeply bewailed the loss of Mr. Palliser, and had almost demanded a pledge from Mr. Bonteen that he would walk exactly in Mr. Palliser's footsteps;—but the offer had been made, and could not be retracted; and Mr. Bonteen already felt the warmth of the halo of perfect divinity.

There are some men who seem to have been born to be Cabinet Ministers,—dukes mostly, or earls, or the younger sons of such,—who have been trained to it from their very cradles, and of whom we may imagine that they are subject to no special awe when they first enter into that august assembly, and feel but little personal elevation. But to the political aspirant not born in the purple of public life, this entrance upon the councils of the higher deities must be accompanied by a feeling of supreme triumph, dashed by considerable misgivings. Perhaps Mr. Bonteen was revelling in his triumph;—perhaps he was anticipating his misgivings. Phineas, though disinclined to make any inquiries of a friend which might seem to refer to his own condition, felt no such reluctance in regard to one who certainly could

not suspect him of asking a favour. He was presumed to be on terms of intimacy with the man, and he took his seat beside him, asking some question as to the debate. Now Mr. Bonteen had more than once expressed an opinion among his friends that Phineas Finn would throw his party over, and vote with the Government. The Rattlers and Erles and Fitzgibbons all knew that Phineas was safe, but Mr. Bonteen was still in doubt. It suited him to affect something more than doubt on the present occasion. "I wonder that you should ask me," said Mr. Bonteen.

"What do you mean by that?"

"I presume that you, as usual, will vote against us."

"I never voted against my party but once," said Phineas, "and then I did it with the approbation of every man in it for whose good opinion I cared a straw." There was insult in his tone as he said this, and something near akin to insult in his words.

"You must do it again now, or break every promise that you made at Tankerville."

"Do you know what promise I made at Tankerville? I shall break no promise."

"You must allow me to say, Mr. Finn, that the kind of independence which is practised by you and Mr. Monk, grand as it may be on the part of men who avowedly abstain from office, is a little dangerous when it is now and again adopted by men who have taken place. I like to be sure that the men who are in the same boat with me won't take it into their heads that their duty requires them to scuttle the ship." Having so spoken, Mr. Bonteen, with nearly all the grace of a full-fledged Cabinet Minister, rose from his seat on the corner of the sofa and joined a small congregation.

Phineas felt that his ears were tingling and that his face was red. He looked round to ascertain from the countenances of others whether they had heard what had been said. Nobody had been close to them, and he thought that the conversation had been unnoticed. He knew now that he had been imprudent in addressing himself to Mr. Bonteen, though the question that he had first asked had been quite common-place. As it was, the man, he thought, had been determined to affront him, and had made a charge against him which he could not allow to pass unnoticed. And then there was all the additional bitterness in it which arose from the conviction that Bonteen had spoken the opinion of other men as well as his own, and that he had plainly indicated that the gates of the official paradise were to be closed against the presumed offender. Phineas had before believed that it was to be so, but that belief had now become assurance. He got up in his misery to leave the room, but as he did so he met Laurence Fitzgibbon. "You have heard the news about Bonteen?" said Laurence.

"What news?"

"He 's to be pitchforked up to the Exchequer. They say it 's quite settled. The higher a monkey climbs——; you know the proverb." So saying Laurence Fitzgibbon passed into the room, and Phineas Finn took his departure in solitude.

And so the man with whom he had managed to quarrel utterly was to be one in the Cabinet, a man whose voice would probably be potential in the selection of minor members of the Government. It seemed to him to be almost incredible that such a one as Mr. Bonteen should be chosen for such an office. He had

despised almost as soon as he had known Mr. Bonteen, and had rarely heard the future manager of the finance of the country spoken of with either respect or regard. He had regarded Mr. Bonteen as a useful, dull, unscrupulous politician, well accustomed to Parliament, acquainted with the bypaths and back doors of official life,—and therefore certain of employment when the liberals were in power; but there was no one in the party he had thought less likely to be selected for high place. And yet this man was to be made Chancellor of the Exchequer, while he, Phineas Finn, very probably at this man's instance, was to be left out in the cold.

He knew himself to be superior to the man he hated, to have higher ideas of political life, and to be capable of greater political sacrifices. He himself had sat shoulder to shoulder with many men on the Treasury Bench whose political principles he had not greatly valued; but of none of them had he thought so little as he had done of Mr. Bonteen. And yet this Mr. Bonteen was to be the new Chancellor of the Exchequer! He walked home to his lodgings in Marlborough Street, wretched because of his own failure; —doubly wretched because of the other man's success.

He lay awake half the night thinking of the words that had been spoken to him, and after breakfast on the following morning he wrote the following note to his enemy:—

"House of Commons, 5th April, 18—.

"Dear Mr. Bonteen,—It is a matter of extreme regret to me that last night at the Universe I should have asked you some chance question about the coming division. Had I guessed to what it might have

led, I should not have addressed you. But as it is, I can hardly abstain from noticing what appeared to me to be a personal charge made against myself with a great want of the courtesy which is supposed to prevail among men who have acted together. Had we never done so my original question to you might perhaps have been deemed an impertinence.

"As it was, you accused me of having been dishonest to my party, and of having 'scuttled the ship.' On the occasion to which you alluded I acted with much consideration, greatly to the detriment of my own prospects,—and as I believed with the approbation of all who knew anything of the subject. If you will make inquiry of Mr. Gresham, or Lord Cantrip, who was then my chief, I think that either will tell you that my conduct on that occasion was not such as to lay me open to reproach. If you will do this, I think that you cannot fail afterwards to express regret for what you said to me last night.

"Yours sincerely,

"PHINEAS FINN.

"Thos. Bonteen, Esq., M.P."

He did not like the letter when he had written it, but he did not know how to improve it, and he sent it.

CHAPTER VIII.

POLITICAL VENOM.

On the Monday Mr. Turnbull opened the ball by declaring his reasons for going into the same lobby with Mr. Daubeny. This he did at great length. To him all the mighty pomp and all the little squabbles of office were, he said, as nothing. He would never allow himself to regard the person of the Prime Minister. The measure before the House ever had been and ever should be all in all to him. If the public weal were more regarded in that House, and the quarrels of men less considered, he thought that the service of the country would be better done. He was answered by Mr. Monk, who was sitting near him, and who intended to support Mr. Gresham. Mr. Monk was rather happy in pulling his old friend, Mr. Turnbull, to pieces, expressing his opinion that a difference in men meant a difference in measures. The characters of men whose principles were known were guarantees for the measures they would advocate. To him, —Mr. Monk,—it was matter of very great moment who was Prime Minister of England. He was always selfish enough to wish for a Minister with whom he himself could agree on the main questions of the day. As he certainly could not say that he had political confidence in the present ministry, he should certainly vote against them on this occasion.

In the course of the evening Phineas found a letter

addressed to himself from Mr. Bonteen. It was as follows:—

"House of Commons, April 5th, 18—.

"Dear Mr. Finn,—I never accused you of dishonesty. You must have misheard or misunderstood me if you thought so. I did say that you had scuttled the ship;—and as you most undoubtedly did scuttle it,—you and Mr. Monk between you,—I cannot retract my words.

"I do not want to go to any one for testimony as to your merits on the occasion. I accused you of having done nothing dishonourable or disgraceful. I think I said that there was danger in the practice of scuttling. I think so still, though I know that many fancy that those who scuttle do a fine thing. I don't deny that it 's fine, and therefore you can have no cause of complaint against me.

"Yours truly,

"T. Bonteen."

He had brought a copy of his own letter in his pocket to the House, and he showed the correspondence to Mr. Monk. "I would not have noticed it, had I been you," said he.

"You can have no idea of the offensive nature of the remark when it was made."

"It 's as offensive to me as to you, but I should not think of moving in such a matter. When a man annoys you, keep out of his way. It is generally the best thing you can do."

"If a man were to call you a liar?"

"But men don't call each other liars. Bonteen understands the world much too well to commit himself

by using any word which common opinion would force him to retract. He says we scuttled the ship. Well; —we did. Of all the political acts of my life it is the one of which I am most proud. The manner in which you helped me has entitled you to my affectionate esteem. But we did scuttle the ship. Before you can quarrel with Bonteen you must be able to show that a metaphorical scuttling of a ship must necessarily be a disgraceful act. You see how he at once retreats behind the fact that it need not be so."

"You would n't answer his letter."

"I think not. You can do yourself no good by a correspondence in which you cannot get a hold of him. And if you did get a hold of him you would injure yourself much more than him. Just drop it." This added much to our friend's misery, and made him feel that the weight of it was almost more than he could bear. His enemy had got the better of him at every turn. He had now rushed into a correspondence as to which he would have to own by his silence that he had been confuted. And yet he was sure that Mr. Bonteen had at the club insulted him most unjustifiably, and that if the actual truth were known, no man, certainly not Mr. Monk, would hesitate to say that reparation was due to him. And yet what could he do? He thought that he would consult Lord Cantrip, and endeavoured to get from his late chief some advice more palatable than that which had been tendered to him by Mr. Monk.

In the meantime, animosities in the House were waxing very furious; and, as it happened, the debate took a turn that was peculiarly injurious to Phineas Finn in his present state of mind. The rumour as to the future

promotion of Mr. Bonteen, which had been conveyed by Laurence Fitzgibbon to Phineas at the Universe, had, as was natural, spread far and wide, and had reached the ears of those who still sat on the ministerial benches. Now it is quite understood among politicians in this country that no man should presume that he will have imposed upon him the task of forming a ministry until he has been called upon by the Crown to undertake that great duty. Let the Gresham or the Daubeny of the day be ever so sure that the reins of the State chariot must come into his hands, he should not visibly prepare himself for the seat on the box till he has actually been summoned to place himself there. At this moment it was alleged that Mr. Gresham had departed from the reticence and modesty usual in such a position as his, by taking steps towards the formation of a Cabinet, while it was as yet quite possible that he might never be called upon to form any Cabinet. Late on this Monday night, when the House was quite full, one of Mr. Daubeny's leading lieutenants, a secretary of state, Sir Orlando Drought by name,—a gentleman who, if he had any heart in the matter, must have hated this Church Bill from the very bottom of his heart, and who on that account was the more bitter against opponents who had not ceased to throw in his teeth his own political tergiversation,—fell foul of Mr. Gresham as to this rumoured appointment to the Chancellorship of the Exchequer. The reader will easily imagine the things that were said. Sir Orlando had heard, and had been much surprised at hearing, that a certain honourable member of that House, who had long been known to them as a tenant of the ministerial bench, had already been appointed

to a high office. He, Sir Orlando, had not been aware that the office had been vacant, or that if vacant it would have been at the disposal of the right honourable gentleman; but he believed that there was no doubt that the place in question, with a seat in the Cabinet, had been tendered to, and accepted by, the honourable member to whom he alluded. Such was the rabid haste with which the right honourable gentleman opposite, and his colleagues, were attempting, he would not say to climb, but to rush into office, by opposing a great measure of reform, the wisdom of which, as was notorious to all the world, they themselves did not dare to deny. Much more of the same kind was said, during which Mr. Gresham pulled about his hat, shuffled his feet, showed his annoyance to all the House, and at last jumped upon his legs.

"If," said Sir Orlando Drought,—"if the right honourable gentleman wishes to deny the accuracy of any statements that I have made, I will give way to him for the moment, that he may do so."

"I deny utterly, not only the accuracy, but every detail of the statement made by the right honourable gentleman opposite," said Mr. Gresham, still standing and holding his hat in his hand as he completed his denial.

"Does the right honourable gentleman mean to assure me that he has not selected his future Chancellor of the Exchequer?"

"The right honourable gentleman is too acute not to be aware that we on this side of the House may have made such selection, and that yet every detail of the statement which he has been rash enough to make to the House may be——unfounded. The word,

sir, is weak; but I would fain avoid the use of any words which, justifiable though they might be, would offend the feelings of the House. I will explain to the House exactly what has been done."

Then there was a great hubbub,—cries of "Order," "Gresham," "Spoke," "Hear, hear," and the like,—during which Sir Orlando Drought and Mr. Gresham both stood on their legs. So powerful was Mr. Gresham's voice that, through it all, every word that he said was audible to the reporters. His opponent hardly attempted to speak, but stood relying upon his right. Mr. Gresham said he understood that it was the desire of the House that he should explain the circumstances in reference to the charge that had been made against him, and it would certainly be for the convenience of the House that this should be done at the moment. The Speaker of course ruled that Sir Orlando was in possession of the floor, but suggested that it might be convenient that he should yield to the right honourable gentleman on the other side for a few minutes. Mr. Gresham, as a matter of course, succeeded. Rights and rules, which are bonds of iron to a little man, are packthread to a giant. No one in all that assembly knew the House better than did Mr. Gresham, was better able to take it by storm, or more obdurate in perseverance. He did make his speech, though clearly he had no right to do so. The House, he said, was aware, that by the most unfortunate demise of the late Duke of Omnium, a gentleman had been removed from this House to another place, whose absence from their counsels would long be felt as a very grievous loss. Then he pronounced a eulogy on Plantagenet Palliser, so graceful and well arranged, that

even the bitterness of the existing opposition was unable to demur to it. The House was well aware of the nature of the labours which now for some years past had occupied the mind of the noble Duke; and the paramount importance which the country attached to their conclusion. The noble Duke no doubt was not absolutely debarred from a continuance of his work by the change which had fallen upon him; but it was essential that some gentleman, belonging to the same party with the noble Duke, versed in office, and having a seat in that House, should endeavour to devote himself to the great measure which had occupied so much of the attention of the late Chancellor of the Exchequer. No doubt it must be fitting that the gentleman so selected should be at the Exchequer, in the event of their party coming into office. The honourable gentleman to whom allusion had been made had acted throughout with the present noble Duke in arranging the details of the measure in question; and the probability of his being able to fill the shoes left vacant by the accession to the peerage of the noble Duke had, indeed, been discussed;—but the discussion had been made in reference to the measure, and only incidentally in regard to the office. He, Mr. Gresham, held that he had done nothing that was indiscreet,—nothing that his duty did not demand. If right honourable gentlemen opposite were of a different opinion, he thought that that difference came from the fact that they were less intimately acquainted than he unfortunately had been with the burdens and responsibilities of legislation.

There was very little in the dispute which seemed to be worthy of the place in which it occurred, or of the vigour with which it was conducted; but it

served to show the temper of the parties and to express the bitterness of the political feelings of the day. It was said at the time, that never within the memory of living politicians had so violent an animosity displayed itself in the House as had been witnessed on this night. While Mr. Gresham was giving his explanation, Mr. Daubeny had arisen, and with a mock solemnity that was peculiar to him on occasions such as these, had appealed to the Speaker whether the right honourable gentleman opposite should not be called upon to resume his seat. Mr. Gresham had put him down with a wave of his hand. An affected stateliness cannot support itself but for a moment; and Mr. Daubeny had been forced to sit down when the Speaker did not at once support his appeal. But he did not forget that wave of the hand, nor did he forgive it. He was a man who in public life rarely forgot, and never forgave. They used to say of him that "at home" he was kindly and forbearing, simple and unostentatious. It may be so. Who does not remember that horrible Turk, Jacob Asdrubal, the Old Bailey barrister, the terror of witnesses, the bane of judges,—who was gall and wormwood to all opponents. It was said of him that "at home" his docile amiability was the marvel of his friends, and delight of his wife and daughters. "At home," perhaps, Mr. Daubeny might have been waved at, and have forgiven it; but men who saw the scene in the House of Commons knew that he would never forgive Mr. Gresham. As for Mr. Gresham himself, he triumphed at the moment, and exulted in his triumph.

Phineas Finn heard it all, and was disgusted to find that his enemy thus became the hero of the hour. It

was, indeed, the opinion generally of the liberal party that Mr. Gresham had not said much to flatter his new Chancellor of the Exchequer. In praise of Plantagenet Palliser he had been very loud, and he had no doubt said that which implied the capability of Mr. Bonteen, who, as it happened, was sitting next to him at the time; but he had implied also that the mantle which was to be transferred from Mr. Palliser to Mr. Bonteen would be carried by its new wearer with grace very inferior to that which had marked all the steps of his predecessor. Rattler, and Erle, and Fitzgibbon, and others had laughed in their sleeves at the expression, understood by them, of Mr. Gresham's doubt as to the qualifications of his new assistant, and Sir Orlando Drought, in continuing his speech, remarked that the warmth of the right honourable gentleman had been so completely expended in abusing his enemies that he had had none left for the defence of his friend. But to Phineas it seemed that this Bonteen, who had so grievously injured him, and whom he so thoroughly despised, was carrying off all the glories of the fight. A certain amount of consolation was, however, afforded to him. Between one and two o'clock he was told by Mr. Rattler that he might enjoy the privilege of adjourning the debate,—by which would accrue to him the right of commencing on the morrow, —and this he did at a few minutes before three.

CHAPTER IX.

SEVENTY-TWO.

On the next morning Phineas, with his speech before him, was obliged for a while to forget, or at least to postpone, Mr. Bonteen and his injuries. He could not now go to Lord Cantrip, as the hours were too precious to him, and, as he felt, too short. Though he had been thinking what he would say ever since the debate had become imminent, and knew accurately the line which he would take, he had not as yet prepared a word of his speech. But he had resolved that he would not prepare a word otherwise than he might do by arranging certain phrases in his memory. There should be nothing written; he had tried that before in old days, and had broken down with the effort. He would load himself with no burden of words in itself so heavy that the carrying of it would incapacitate him for any other effort.

After a late breakfast he walked out far away, into the Regent's Park, and there, wandering among the uninteresting paths, he devised triumphs of oratory for himself. Let him resolve as he would to forget Mr. Bonteen, and that charge of having been untrue to his companions, he could not restrain himself from efforts to fit the matter after some fashion into his speech. Dim ideas of a definition of political honesty crossed his brain, bringing with them, however, a conviction that his thought must be much more clearly

worked out than it could be on that day before he might venture to give it birth in the House of Commons. He knew that he had been honest two years ago in separating himself from his colleagues. He knew that he would be honest now in voting with them, apparently in opposition to the pledges he had given at Tankerville. But he knew also that it would behove him to abstain from speaking of himself unless he could do so in close reference to some point specially in dispute between the two parties. When he returned to eat a mutton chop at Great Marlborough Street at three o'clock he was painfully conscious that all his morning had been wasted. He had allowed his mind to run revel, instead of tying it down to the formation of sentences and construction of arguments.

He entered the House with the Speaker at four o'clock, and took his seat without uttering a word to any man. He seemed to be more than ever disjoined from his party. Hitherto, since he had been seated by the judge's order, the former companions of his parliamentary life,—the old men whom he had used to know,—had to a certain degree admitted him among them. Many of them sat on the front opposition bench, whereas he, as a matter of course, had seated himself behind. But he had very frequently found himself next to some man who had held office and was living in the hope of holding it again, and had felt himself to be in some sort recognised as an aspirant. Now it seemed to him that it was otherwise. He did not doubt that Bonteen had shown the correspondence to his friends, and that the Rattlers and Erles had conceded that he, Phineas, was put out of court by it. He sat doggedly still, at the end of a bench behind

Mr. Gresham, and close to the gangway. When Mr. Gresham entered the House, he was received with much cheering; but Phineas did not join in the cheer. He was studious to avoid any personal recognition of the future giver-away of places, though they two were close together; and he then fancied that Mr. Gresham had specially and most ungraciously abstained from any recognition of him. Mr. Monk, who sat near him, spoke a kind word to him. "I shan't be very long," said Phineas; "not above twenty minutes, I should think." He was able to assume an air of indifference, and yet at the moment he heartily wished himself back in Dublin. It was not now that he feared the task immediately before him, but that he was overcome by the feeling of general failure which had come upon him. Of what use was it to him or to any one else that he should be there in that assembly, with the privilege of making a speech that would influence no human being, unless his being there could be made a step to something beyond? While the usual preliminary work was being done, he looked round the House and saw Lord Cantrip in the peers' gallery. Alas! of what avail was that? He had always been able to bind to him individuals with whom he had been brought into close contact; but more than that was wanted in this most precarious of professions, in which now for a second time, he was attempting to earn his bread.

At half-past four he was on his legs in the midst of a crowded house. The chance,—perhaps the hope,—of some such encounter as that of the former day, brought members into their seats, and filled the gallery with strangers. We may say, perhaps, that the highest duty imposed upon us as a nation is the manage-

ment of India; and we may also say that in a great national assembly personal squabbling among its members is the least dignified work in which it can employ itself. But the prospect of an explanation,—or otherwise of a fight,—between two leading politicians, will fill the House; and any allusion to our Eastern Empire will certainly empty it. An aptitude for such encounters is almost a necessary qualification for a popular leader in Parliament, as is a capacity for speaking for three hours to the reporters, and to the reporters only, —a necessary qualification for an Under-Secretary of State for India.

Phineas had the advantage of the temper of the moment in a House thoroughly crowded, and he enjoyed it. Let a man doubt ever so much his own capacity for some public exhibition which he has undertaken; yet he will always prefer to fail,—if fail he must,—before a large audience. But on this occasion there was no failure. That sense of awe for the surrounding circumstances of the moment, which had once been heavy on him, and which he still well remembered, had been overcome, and had never returned to him. He felt now that he should not lack words to pour out his own individual grievances were it not that he was prevented by a sense of the indiscretion of doing so. As it was, he did succeed in alluding to his own condition in a manner that brought upon him no reproach. He began by saying that he should not have added to the difficulty of the debate,—which was one simply of length,—were it not that he had been accused in advance of voting against a measure as to which he had pledged himself at the hustings to do all that he could to further it. No man was more anx-

ious than he, an Irish Roman Catholic, to abolish that which he thought to be the anomaly of a State Church, and he did not in the least doubt that he should now be doing the best in his power with that object in voting against the second reading of the present bill. That such a measure should be carried by the gentlemen opposite, in their own teeth, at the bidding of the right honourable gentleman who led them, he thought to be impossible. Upon this he was hooted at from the other side with many gestures of indignant denial, and was, of course, equally cheered by those around him. Such interruptions are new breath to the nostrils of all orators, and Phineas enjoyed the noise. He repeated his assertion that it would be an evil thing for the country that the measure should be carried by men who in their hearts condemned it, and was vehemently called to order for this assertion about the hearts of gentlemen. But a speaker who can certainly be made amenable to authority for vilipending in debate the heart of any specified opponent, may with safety attribute all manner of ill to the agglomerated hearts of a party. To have told any individual conservative,—Sir Orlando Drought for instance,—that he was abandoning all the convictions of his life, because he was a creature at the command of Mr. Daubeny, would have been an insult that would have moved even the Speaker from his serenity; but you can hardly be personal to a whole bench of conservatives,—to bench above bench of conservatives. The charge had been made and repeated over and over again, till all the Orlando Droughts were ready to cut some man's throat,—whether their own or Mr. Daubeny's, or Mr. Gresham's, they hardly knew. It might probably have

been Mr. Daubeny's from choice, had any legal cutting of a throat been possible. It was now made again by Phineas Finn,—with the ostensible object of defending himself,—and he for the moment became the target for the conservative wrath. Some one asked him in fury by what right he took upon himself to judge of the motives of gentlemen on that side of the House of whom personally he knew nothing. Phineas replied that he did not at all doubt the motives of the honourable gentleman who asked the question, which he was sure were noble and patriotic. But unfortunately the whole country was convinced that the conservative party as a body was supporting this measure, unwillingly, and at the bidding of one man!—and, for himself, he was bound to say that he agreed with the country. And so the row was renewed and prolonged, and the gentlemen assembled, members and strangers together, passed a pleasant evening.

Before he sat down, Phineas made one allusion to that former scuttling of the ship,—an accusation as to which had been made against him so injuriously by Mr. Bonteen. He himself, he said, had been called unpractical, and perhaps he might allude to a vote which he had given in that House when last he had the honour of sitting there, and on giving which he resigned the office which he had then held. He had the gratification of knowing that he had been so far practical as to have then foreseen the necessity of a measure which had since been passed. And he did not doubt that he would hereafter be found to have been equally practical in the view that he had expressed on the hustings at Tankerville, for he was convinced that before long the anomaly of which he had spoken

would cease to exist under the influence of a Government that would really believe in the work it was doing.

There was no doubt as to the success of his speech. The vehemence with which his insolence was abused by one after another of those who spoke later from the other side was ample evidence of its success. But nothing occurred then or at the conclusion of the debate to make him think that he had won his way back to Elysium. During the whole evening he exchanged not a syllable with Mr. Gresham,—who indeed was not much given to converse with those around him in the House. Erle said a few good-natured words to him, and Mr. Monk praised him highly. But in reading the general barometer of the party as regarded himself, he did not find that the mercury went up. He was wretchedly anxious, and angry with himself for his own anxiety. He scorned to say a word that should sound like an entreaty; and yet he had placed his whole heart on a thing which seemed to be slipping from him for the want of asking. In a day or two it would be known whether the present ministry would or would not go out. That they must be out of office before a month was over seemed to him the opinion of everybody. His fate,—and what a fate it was!—would then be absolutely in the hands of Mr. Gresham. Yet he could not speak a word of his hopes and fears even to Mr. Gresham. He had given up everything in the world with the view of getting into office; and now that the opportunity had come,—an opportunity which if allowed to slip could hardly return again in time to be of service to him,—the prize was to elude his grasp!

But yet he did not say a word to any one on the subject that was so near his heart, although in the course of the night he spoke to Lord Cantrip in the gallery of the House. He told his friend that a correspondence had taken place between himself and Mr. Bonteen, in which he thought that he had been ill-used, and as to which he was quite anxious to ask his lordship's advice. "I heard that you and he had been tilting at each other," said Lord Cantrip, smiling.

"Have you seen the letters?"

"No;—but I was told of them by Lord Fawn, who has seen them."

"I knew he would show them to every newsmonger about the clubs," said Phineas angrily.

"You can't quarrel with Bonteen for showing them to Fawn, if you intend to show them to me."

"He may publish them at Charing Cross if he likes."

"Exactly. I am sure that there will have been nothing in them prejudicial to you. What I mean is that if you think it necessary, with a view to your own character, to show them to me or to another friend, you cannot complain that he should do the same."

An appointment was made at Lord Cantrip's house for the next morning, and Phineas could but acknowledge to himself that the man's manner to himself had been kind and constant. Nevertheless, the whole affair was going against him. Lord Cantrip had not said a word prejudicial to that wretch Bonteen; much less had he hinted at any future arrangements which would be comfortable to poor Phineas. They two, Lord Cantrip and Phineas, had at one period been on most intimate terms together;—had worked in the same office, and had thoroughly trusted each other. The

elder of the two,—for Lord Cantrip was about ten years senior to Phineas,—had frequently expressed the most lively interest in the prospects of the other; and Phineas had felt that in any emergency he could tell his friend all his hopes and fears. But now he did not say a word of his position, nor did Lord Cantrip allude to it. They were to meet on the morrow in order that Lord Cantrip might read the correspondence;—but Phineas was sure that no word would be said about the Government.

At five o'clock in the morning the division took place, and the Government was beaten by a majority of seventy-two. This was much higher than any man had expected. When the parties were marshalled in the opposite lobbies it was found that in the last moment the number of those conservatives who dared to rebel against their conservative leaders was swelled by the course which the debate had taken. There were certain men who could not endure to be twitted with having deserted the principles of their lives, when it was clear that nothing was to be gained by the party by such desertion.

CHAPTER X.

THE CONSPIRACY.

On the morning following the great division, Phineas was with his friend, Lord Cantrip, by eleven o'clock; and Lord Cantrip, when he had read the two letters in which were comprised the whole correspondence, made to our unhappy hero the following little speech: "I do not think that you can do anything. Indeed, I am sure that Mr. Monk is quite right. I don't quite see what it is that you wish to do. Privately,—between our two selves,—I do not hesitate to say that Mr. Bonteen has intended to be ill-natured. I fancy that he is an ill-natured,—or at any rate a jealous,—man; and that he would be willing to run down a competitor in the race who had made his running after a fashion different from his own. Bonteen has been a useful man,—a very useful man; and the more so perhaps because he has not entertained any high political theory of his own. You have chosen to do so,—and undoubtedly when you and Monk left us, to our very great regret, you did scuttle the ship."

"We had no intention of that kind."

"Do not suppose that I blame you. That which was odious to the eyes of Mr. Bonteen was to my thinking high and honourable conduct. I have known the same thing done by members of a Government perhaps half-a-dozen times, and the men by whom it

has been done have been the best and noblest of our modern statesmen. There has generally been a hard contest in the man's breast between loyalty to his party and strong personal convictions, the result of which has been an inability on the part of the struggler to give even a silent support to a measure which he has disapproved. That inability is no doubt troublesome at the time to the colleagues of the seceder, and constitutes an offence hardly to be pardoned by such gentlemen as Mr. Bonteen."

"For Mr. Bonteen personally I care nothing."

"But of course you must endure the ill-effects of his influence,—be they what they may. When you seceded from our Government you looked for certain adverse consequences. If you did not, where was your self-sacrifice? That such men as Mr. Bonteen should feel that you had scuttled the ship, and be unable to forgive you for doing so,—that is exactly the evil which you knew you must face. You have to face it now, and surely you can do so without showing your teeth. Hereafter, when men more thoughtful than Mr. Bonteen shall have come to acknowledge the high principle by which your conduct has been governed, you will receive your reward. I suppose Mr. Daubeny must resign now."

"Everybody says so."

"I am by no means sure that he will. Any other Minister since Lord North's time would have done so, with such a majority against him on a vital measure; but he is a man who delights in striking out some wonderful course for himself."

"A Prime Minister so beaten surely can't go on."

"Not for long, one would think. And yet how are

you to turn him out? It depends very much on a man's power of endurance."

"His colleagues will resign, I should think."

"Probably;—and then he must go. I should say that that will be the way in which the matter will settle itself. Good morning, Finn;—and take my word for it, you had better not answer Mr. Bonteen's letter."

Not a word had fallen from Lord Cantrip's friendly lips as to the probability of Phineas being invited to join the future Government. An attempt had been made to console him with the hazy promise of some future reward,—which, however, was to consist rather of the good opinion of good men than of anything tangible and useful. But even this would never come to him. What would good men know of him and of his self-sacrifice when he should have been driven out of the world by poverty, and forced probably to go to some New Zealand or back Canadian settlement to look for his bread? How easy, thought Phineas, must be the sacrifices of rich men, who can stay their time, and wait in perfect security for their rewards! But for such a one as he, truth to a principle was political annihilation. Two or three years ago he had done what he knew to be a noble thing;—and now, because he had done that noble thing, he was to be regarded as unfit for that very employment for which he was peculiarly fitted. But Bonteen and company had not been his only enemies. His luck had been against him throughout. Mr. Quintus Slide, with his People's Banner, and the story of that wretched affair in Judd Street, had been as strong against him probably as Mr. Bonteen's ill-word. Then he thought of Lady Laura, and her love for him. His gratitude to Lady

Laura was boundless. There was nothing he would not do for Lady Laura,—were it in his power to do anything. But no circumstance in his career had been so unfortunate for him as this affection. A wretched charge had been made against him which, though wholly untrue, was as it were so strangely connected with the truth, that slanderers might not improbably be able almost to substantiate their calumnies. She would be in London soon, and he must devote himself to her service. But every act of friendship that he might do for her would be used as proof of the accusation that had been made against him. As he thought of all this he was walking towards Park Lane in order that he might call upon Madame Goesler according to his promise. As he went up to the drawing-room he met old Mr. Maule coming down, and the two bowed to each other on the stairs. In the drawing-room, sitting with Madame Goesler, he found Mrs. Bonteen. Now Mrs. Bonteen was almost as odious to him as was her husband.

"Did you ever know anything more shameful, Mr. Finn," said Mrs. Bonteen, "than the attack made upon Mr. Bonteen the night before last?" Phineas could see a smile on Madame Goesler's face as the question was asked;—for she knew, and he knew that she knew, how great was the antipathy between him and the Bonteens.

"The attack was upon Mr. Gresham, I thought," said Phineas.

"Oh; yes; nominally. But of course everybody knows what was meant. Upon my word there is twice more jealousy among men than among women. Is there not, Madame Goesler?"

"I don't think any man could be more jealous than I am myself," said Madame Goesler.

"Then you 're fit to be a member of a Government, that 's all. I don't suppose that there is a man in England has worked harder for his party than Mr. Bonteen."

"I don't think there is," said Phineas.

"Or made himself more useful in Parliament. As for work, only that his constitution is so strong, he would have killed himself."

"He should take Thorley's mixture,—twice a day," said Madame Goesler.

"Take!—he never has time to take anything. He breakfasts in his dressing-room, carries his lunch in his pocket, and dines with the division bell ringing him up between his fish and his mutton chop. Now he has got their decimal coinage in hand, and has not a moment to himself, even on Sundays!"

"He 'll be sure to go to heaven for it,—that 's one comfort."

"And because they are absolutely obliged to make him Chancellor of the Exchequer,—just as if he had not earned it,—everybody is so jealous that they are ready to tear him to pieces!"

"Who is everybody?" asked Phineas.

"Oh! I know. It was n't only Sir Orlando Drought. Who told Sir Orlando? Never mind, Mr. Finn."

"I don't in the least, Mrs. Bonteen."

"I should have thought you would have been so triumphant," said Madame Goesler.

"Not in the least, Madame Goesler. Why should I be triumphant. Of course the position is very high,—very high indeed. But it 's no more than what I

have always expected. If a man give up his life to a pursuit, he ought to succeed. As for ambition, I have less of it than any woman. Only I do hate jealousy, Mr. Finn." Then Mrs. Bonteen took her leave, kissing her dear friend, Madame Goesler, and simply bowing to Phineas.

"What a detestable woman!" said Phineas.

"I know of old that you don't love her."

"I don't believe that you love her a bit better than I do, and yet you kiss her."

"Hardly that, Mr. Finn. There has come up a fashion for ladies to pretend to be very loving, and so they put their faces together. Two hundred years ago ladies and gentlemen did the same thing with just as little regard for each other. Fashions change, you know."

"That was a change for the worse, certainly, Madame Goesler."

"It was n't of my doing. So you 've had a great victory."

"Yes;—greater than we expected."

"According to Mrs. Bonteen, the chief result to the country will be that the taxes will be so very safe in her husband's hands! I am sure she believes that all Parliament has been at work in order that he might be made a Cabinet Minister. I rather like her for it."

"I don't like her, or her husband."

"I do like a woman that can thoroughly enjoy her husband's success. When she is talking of his carrying about his food in his pocket she is completely happy. I don't think Lady Glencora ever cared in the least about her husband being Chancellor of the Exchequer."

"Because it added nothing to her own standing."

"That 's very ill-natured, Mr. Finn; and I find that you are becoming generally ill-natured. You used to be the best-humoured of men."

"I had n't so much to try my temper as I have now, and then you must remember, Madame Goesler, that I regard these people as being especially my enemies."

"Lady Glencora was never your enemy."

"Nor my friend,—especially."

"Then you wrong her. If I tell you something you must be discreet."

"Am I not always discreet?"

"She does not love Mr. Bonteen. She has had too much of him at Matching. And as for his wife, she is quite as unwilling to be kissed by her as you can be. Her Grace is determined to fight your battle for you."

"I want her to do nothing of the kind, Madame Goesler."

"You will know nothing about it. We have put our heads to work, and Mr. Palliser,—that is, the new Duke,—is to be made to tell Mr. Gresham that you are to have a place. It is no good you being angry, for the thing is done. If you have enemies behind your back, you must have friends behind your back also. Lady Cantrip is to do the same thing."

"For Heaven's sake, no!"

"It 's all arranged. You 'll be called the ladies' pet, but you must n't mind that. Lady Laura will be here before it 's arranged, and she will get hold of Mr. Erle."

"You are laughing at me, I know."

"Let them laugh that win. We thought of besieging Lord Fawn through Lady Chiltern, but we are not sure that anybody cares for Lord Fawn. The man

we specially want now is the other Duke. We 're afraid of attaching him through the Duchess, because we think that he is inhumanly indifferent to anything that his wife says to him."

"If that kind of thing is done, I shall not accept place even if it is offered me."

"Why not? Are you going to let a man like Mr. Bonteen bowl you over? Did you ever know Lady Glen fail in anything that she attempted? She is preparing a secret with the express object of making Mr. Rattler her confidant. Lord Mount Thistle is her slave, but then I fear Lord Mount Thistle is not of much use. She 'll do anything and everything,—except flatter Mr. Bonteen."

"Heaven forbid that anybody should do that for my sake."

"The truth is that he made himself so disagreeable at Matching that Lady Glen is broken-hearted at finding that he is to seem to owe his promotion to her husband's favour. Now you know all about it."

"You have been very wrong to tell me."

"Perhaps I have, Mr. Finn. But I thought it better that you should know that you have friends at work for you. We believe,—or rather, the Duchess believes,—that falsehoods have been used which are as disparaging to Lady Laura Kennedy as they are injurious to you, and she is determined to put it right. Some one has told Mr. Gresham that you have been the means of breaking the hearts both of Lord Brentford and Mr. Kennedy,—two members of the late Cabinet,—and he must be made to understand that this is untrue. If only for Lady Laura's sake you must submit."

"Lord Brentford and I are the best friends in the world."

"And Mr. Kennedy is a madman,—absolutely in custody of his friends, as everybody knows; and yet the story has been made to work."

"And you do not feel that all this is derogatory to me?"

Madame Goesler was silent for a moment, and then she answered boldly, "Not a whit. Why should it be derogatory? It is not done with the object of obtaining an improper appointment on behalf of an unimportant man. When falsehoods of that kind are told, you can't meet them in a straightforward way. I suppose I know with fair accuracy the sort of connection there has been between you and Lady Laura." Phineas very much doubted whether she had any such knowledge; but he said nothing, though the lady paused a few moments for reply. "You can't go and tell Mr. Gresham all that; nor can any friend do so on your behalf. It would be absurd."

"Most absurd."

"And yet it is essential to your interests that he should know it. When your enemies are undermining you, you must countermine or you 'll be blown up."

"I 'd rather fight above ground."

"That 's all very well, but your enemies won't stay above ground. Is that newspaper man above ground? And for a little job of clever mining, believe me, that there is not a better engineer going than Lady Glen; —not but what I 've known her to be very nearly 'hoist with her own petard,'"—added Madame Goesler, as she remembered a certain circumstance in their joint lives.

All that Madame Goesler said was true. A conspiracy had been formed, in the first place at the instance of Madame Goesler, but altogether by the influence of the young Duchess, for forcing upon the future Premier the necessity of admitting Phineas Finn into his Government. On the Wednesday following the conclusion of the debate,—the day on the morning of which the division was to take place,—there was no House. On the Thursday, the last day on which the House was to sit before the Easter holidays, Mr. Daubeny announced his intention of postponing the declaration of his intentions till after the adjournment. The House would meet, he said, on that day week, and then he would make his official statement. This communication he made very curtly, and in a manner that was thought by some to be almost insolent to the House. It was known that he had been greviously disappointed by the result of the debate,—not probably having expected a majority since his adversary's strategy had been declared, but always hoping that the deserters from his own standard would be very few. The deserters had been very many, and Mr. Daubeny was majestic in his wrath.

Nothing, however, could be done till after Easter. The Rattlers of the liberal party were very angry at the delay, declaring that it would have been much to the advantage of the country at large that the vacation week should have been used for constructing a liberal Cabinet. This work of construction always takes time, and delays the business of the country. No one can have known better than did Mr. Daubeny how great was the injury of delay, and how advantageously the short holiday might have been used. With a majority of

seventy-two against him, there could be no reason why he should not have at once resigned, and advised the Queen to send for Mr. Gresham. Nothing could be worse than his conduct. So said the liberals thirsting for office. Mr. Gresham himself did not open his mouth when the announcement was made;—nor did any man, marked for future office, rise to denounce the beaten statesman. But one or two independent members expressed their great regret at the unnecessary delay which was to take place before they were informed who was to be the Minister of the Crown. But Mr. Daubeny, as soon as he had made his statement, stalked out of the House, and no reply whatever was made to the independent members. Some few sublime and hot-headed gentlemen muttered the word "impeachment." Others, who were more practical and less dignified, suggested that the Prime Minister "ought to have his head punched."

It thus happened that all the world went out of town that week,—so that the Duchess of Omnium was down at Matching when Phineas called at the Duke's house in Carlton Terrace on Friday. With what object he had called he hardly knew himself; but he thought that he intended to assure the Duchess that he was not a candidate for office, and that he must deprecate her interference. Luckily,—or unluckily,—he did not see her, and he felt that it would be impossible to convey his wishes in a letter. The whole subject was one which would have defied him to find words sufficiently discreet for his object.

The Duke and Duchess of St. Bungay were at Matching for the Easter,—as also was Barrington Erle,

and also that dreadful Mr. Bonteen, from whose presence the poor Duchess of Omnium could in these days never altogether deliver herself. "Duke," she said, "you know Mr. Finn?"

"Certainly. It was not very long ago that I was talking to him."

"He used to be in office, you remember."

"Oh yes;—and a very good beginner he was. Is he a friend of your Grace's?"

"A great friend. I 'll tell you what I want you to do. You must have some place found for him."

"My dear Duchess, I never interfere."

"Why, Duke, you 've made more Cabinets than any man living."

"I fear, indeed, that I have been at the construction of more Governments than most men. It 's forty years ago since Lord Melbourne first did me the honour of consulting me. When asked for advice, my dear, I have very often given it. It has occasionally been my duty to say that I could not myself give my slender assistance to a ministry unless I were supported by the presence of this or that political friend. But never in my life have I asked for an appointment as a personal favour; and I am sure you won't be angry with me if I say that I cannot begin to do so now."

"But Mr. Finn ought to be there. He did so well before."

"If so, let us presume that he will be there. I can only say, from what little I know of him, that I shall be happy to see him in any office to which the future Prime Minister may consider it to be his duty to appoint him." "To think," said the Duchess of Omnium

afterwards to her friend Madame Goesler,—"to think that I should have had that stupid old woman a week in the house, and all for nothing!"

"Upon my word, Duchess," said Barrington Erle, "I don't know why it is, but Gresham seems to have taken a dislike to him."

"It 's Bonteen's doing."

"Very probably."

"Surely you can get the better of that?"

"I look upon Phineas Finn, Duchess, almost as a child of my own. He has come back to Parliament altogether at my instigation."

"Then you ought to help him."

"And so I would if I could. Remember I am not the man I used to be when dear old Mr. Mildmay reigned. The truth is, I never interfere now unless I 'm asked."

"I believe that every one of you is afraid of Mr. Gresham."

"Perhaps we are."

"I 'll tell you what. If he 's passed over I 'll make such a row that some of you shall hear it."

"How fond all you women are of Phineas Finn."

"I don't care that for him," said the Duchess, snapping her fingers—"more than I do, that is, for any other mere acquaintance. The man is very well, as most men are."

"Not all."

"No, not all. Some are as little and jealous as a girl in her tenth season. He is a decently good fellow, and he is to be thrown over, because——"

"Because of what?"

"I don't choose to name any one. You ought to

know all about it, and I do not doubt but you do. Lady Laura Kennedy is your own cousin."

"There is not a spark of truth in all that."

"Of course there is not; and yet he is to be punished. I know very well, Mr. Erle, that if you choose to put your shoulder to the wheel you can manage it; and I shall expect to have it managed."

"Plantagenet," she said the next day to her husband, "I want you to do something for me."

"To do something! What am I to do? It 's very seldom you want anything in my line."

"This is n't in your line at all, and yet I want you to do it."

"Ten to one it 's beyond my means."

"No, it is n't. I know you can if you like. I suppose you are all sure to be in office within ten days or a fortnight?"

"I can't say, my dear. I have promised Mr. Gresham to be of use to him if I can."

"Everybody knows all that. You 're going to be Privy Seal, and to work just the same as ever at those horrible two farthings."

"And what is it you want, Glencora?"

"I want you to say that you won't take any office unless you are allowed to bring in one or two friends with you."

"Why should I do that? I shall not doubt any Cabinet chosen by Mr. Gresham."

"I 'm not speaking of the Cabinet; I allude to men in lower offices, lords, and under-secretaries, and vice-people. You know what I mean."

"I never interfere."

"But you must. Other men do continually. It 's

quite a common thing for a man to insist that one or two others should come in with him."

"Yes. If a man feels that he cannot sustain his own position without support, he declines to join the Government without it. But that is n't my case. The friends who are necessary to me in the Cabinet are the very men who will certainly be there. I would join no Government without the Duke; but——"

"Oh, the Duke—the Duke! I hate dukes—and duchesses too. I 'm not talking about a duke. I want you to oblige me by making a point with Mr. Gresham that Mr. Finn shall have an office."

"Mr. Finn!"

"Yes, Mr. Finn. I 'll explain it all if you wish it."

"My dear Glencora, I never interfere."

"Who does interfere? Everybody says the same. Somebody interferes, I suppose. Mr. Gresham can't know everybody so well as to be able to fit all the pegs into all the holes without saying a word to anybody."

"He would probably speak to Mr. Bonteen."

"Then he would speak to a very disagreeable man, and one I 'm as sick of as I ever was of any man I ever knew. If you can't manage this for me, Plantagenet, I shall take it very ill. It 's a little thing, and I 'm sure you could have it done. I don't very often trouble you by asking for anything."

The Duke in his quiet way was an affectionate man, and an indulgent husband. On the following morning he was closeted with Mr. Bonteen, two private secretaries, and a leading clerk from the Treasury for four hours, during which they were endeavouring to ascertain whether the commercial world of Great Britain would be ruined or enriched if twelve pennies were

declared to contain fifty farthings. The discussion had been grievously burdensome to the minds of the Duke's assistants in it, but he himself had remembered his wife through it all. "By the way," he said, whispering into Mr. Bonteen's private ear as he led that gentleman away to lunch, "if we do come in——"

"Oh, we must come in."

"If we do, I suppose something will be done for that Mr. Finn. He spoke well the other night."

Mr. Bonteen's face became very long. "He helped to upset the coach when he was with us before."

"I don't think that that is much against him."

"Is he—a personal friend of your Grace's?"

"No—not particularly. I never care about such things for myself; but Lady Glencora——"

"I think the Duchess can hardly know what has been his conduct to poor Kennedy. There was a most disreputable row at a public-house in London, and I am told that he behaved—very badly."

"I never heard a word about it," said the Duke.

"I 'll tell you just the truth," said Mr. Bonteen. "I 've been asked about him, and I 've been obliged to say that he would weaken any Government that would give him office."

"Oh, indeed!"

That evening the Duke told the Duchess nearly all that he had heard, and the Duchess swore that she was n't going to be beaten by Mr. Bonteen.

CHAPTER XI.

ONCE AGAIN IN PORTMAN SQUARE.

On the Wednesday in Easter week Lord Brentford and Lady Laura Kennedy reached Portman Square from Dresden, and Phineas, who had remained in town, was summoned thither by a note written at Dover. "We arrived here to-day, and shall be in town to-morrow afternoon, between four and five. Papa wants to see you especially. Can you manage to be with us in the Square at about eight. I know it will be inconvenient, but you will put up with inconvenience. I don't like to keep papa up late; and if he is tired he won't speak to you as he would if you came early.—L. K." Phineas was engaged to dine with Lord Cantrip; but he wrote to excuse himself,—telling the simple truth. He had been asked to see Lord Brentford on business, and must obey the summons.

He was shown into a sitting-room on the ground floor, which he had always known as the Earl's own room, and there he found Lord Brentford alone. The last time he had been there he had come to plead with the Earl on behalf of Lord Chiltern, and the Earl had then been a stern self-willed man, vigorous from a sense of power, and very able to maintain and to express his own feelings. Now he was a broken-down old man,—whose mind had been, as it were, unbooted and put into moral slippers for the remainder of its

term of existence upon earth. He half shuffled up out of his chair as Phineas came up to him, and spoke as though every calamity in the world were oppressing him. "Such a passage! Oh, very bad, indeed! I thought it would have been the death of me. Laura thought it better to come on." The fact, however, had been that the Earl had so many objections to staying at Calais, that his daughter had felt herself obliged to yield to him.

"You must be glad at any rate to have got home," said Phineas.

"Home! I don't know what you call home. I don't suppose I shall ever feel any place to be home again."

"You 'll go to Saulsby;—will you not?"

"How can I tell? If Chiltern would have kept the house up, of course I should have gone there. But he never would do anything like anybody else. Violet wants me to go to that place they 've got there, but I shan't do that."

"It 's a comfortable house."

"I hate horses and dogs, and I won't go."

There was nothing more to be said on that point. "I hope Lady Laura is well."

"No, she 's not. How should she be well? She 's anything but well. She 'll be in directly, but she thought I ought to see you first. I suppose this wretched man is really mad."

"I am told so."

"He never was anything else since I knew him. What are we to do now? Forster says it won't look well to ask for a separation only because he 's insane. He tried to shoot you?"

"And very nearly succeeded."

"Forster says that if we do anything, all that must come out."

"There need not be the slightest hesitation as far as I am concerned, Lord Brentford."

"You know he keeps all her money."

"At present I suppose he could n't give it up."

"Why not? Why should n't he give it up? God bless my soul! Forty thousand pounds and all for nothing. When he married, he declared that he did n't care about it! Money was nothing to him! So she lent it to Chiltern."

"I remember."

"But they had n't been together a year before he asked for it. Now there it is;—and if she were to die to-morrow it would be lost to the family. Something must be done, you know. I can't let her money go in that way."

"You 'll do what Mr. Forster suggests, no doubt."

"But he won't suggest anything. They never do. He does n't care what becomes of the money. It never ought to have been given up as it was."

"It was settled, I suppose."

"Yes;—if there were children. And it will come back to her if he dies first. But mad people never do die. That 's a well-known fact. They 've nothing to trouble them, and they live forever. It 'll all go to some cousin of his that nobody ever saw."

"Not as long as Lady Laura lives."

"But she does not get a penny of the income;—not a penny. There never was anything so cruel. He has published all manner of accusations against her."

"Nobody believes a word of that, my lord."

"And then when she is dragged forward by the necessity of vindicating her character, he goes mad and keeps all her money! There never was anything so cruel since the world began."

This continued for half an hour, and then Lady Laura came in. Nothing had come, or could have come, from the consultation with the Earl. Had it gone on for another hour, he would simply have continued to grumble, and have persevered in insisting upon the hardships he endured. Lady Laura was in black, and looked sad, and old, and careworn; but she did not seem to be ill. Phineas could not but think at the moment how entirely her youth had passed away from her. She came and sat close by him, and began at once to speak of the late debate. "Of course they 'll go out," she said.

"I presume they will."

"And our party will come in?"

"Oh yes!—Mr. Gresham, and the two Dukes, and Lord Cantrip,—with Legge Wilson, Sir Harry Coldfoot, and the rest of them."

"And you?"

Phineas smiled, and tried to smile pleasantly, as he answered, "I don't know that they 'll put themselves out by doing very much for me."

"They 'll do something."

"I fancy not. Indeed, Lady Laura, to tell the truth at once, I know that they don't mean to offer me anything."

"After making you give up your place in Ireland?"

"They did n't make me give it up. I should never dream of using such an argument to any one. Of course I had to judge for myself. There is nothing to

be said about it;—only it is so." As he told her this he strove to look light-hearted, and so to speak that she should not see the depth of his disappointment;—but he failed altogether. She knew him too well not to read his whole heart in the matter.

"Who has said it?" she asked.

"Nobody says things of that kind, and yet one knows."

"And why is it?"

"How can I say? There are various reasons,—and, perhaps, very good reasons. What I did before makes men think that they can't depend on me. At any rate it is so."

"Shall you not speak to Mr. Gresham?"

"Certainly not."

"What do you say, papa?"

"How can I understand it, my dear? There used to be a kind of honour in these things, but that 's all old-fashioned now. Ministers used to think of their political friends; but in these days they only regard their political enemies. If you can make a Minister afraid of you, then it becomes worth his while to buy you up. Most of the young men rise now by making themselves thoroughly disagreeable. Abuse a Minister every night for half a session, and you may be sure to be in office the other half,—if you care about it."

"May I speak to Barrington Erle?" asked Lady Laura.

"I had rather you did not. Of course I must take it as it comes."

"But, my dear Mr. Finn, people do make efforts in such cases. I don't doubt but that at this moment there are a dozen men moving heaven and earth to

secure something. No one has more friends than you have."

Had not her father been present he would have told her what his friends were doing for him, and how unhappy such interferences made him; but he could not explain all this before the Earl. "I would so much rather hear about yourself," he said, again smiling.

"There is but little to say about us. I suppose papa has told you?"

But the Earl had told him nothing, and indeed, there was nothing to tell. The lawyer had advised that Mr. Kennedy's friends should be informed that Lady Laura now intended to live in England, and that they should be invited to make to her some statement as to Mr. Kennedy's condition. If necessary, he, on her behalf, would justify her departure from her husband's roof by a reference to the outrageous conduct of which Mr. Kennedy had since been guilty. In regard to Lady Laura's fortune, Mr. Forster said that she could no doubt apply for alimony, and that if the application were pressed at law she would probably obtain it;—but he could not recommend such a step at the present moment. As to the accusation which had been made against her character, and which had become public through the malice of the editor of the People's Banner, Mr. Forster thought that the best refutation would be found in her return to England. At any rate he would advise no further step at the present moment. Should any further libel appear in the columns of the newspaper, then the question might be again considered. Mr. Forster had already been in Portman Square, and this had been the result of the conference.

"There is not much comfort in it all,—is there?" said Lady Laura.

"There is no comfort in anything," said the Earl.

When Phineas took his leave, Lady Laura followed him out into the hall, and they went together into the large, gloomy dining-room,—gloomy and silent now, but which in former days he had known to be brilliant with many lights, and cheerful with eager voices. "I must have one word with you," she said, standing close to him against the table, and putting her hand upon his arm. "Amidst all my sorrow, I have been so thankful that he did not——kill you."

"I almost wish he had."

"Oh, Phineas!—how can you say words so wicked! Would you have had him a murderer?"

"A madman is responsible for nothing."

"Where should I have been? What should I have done? But of course you do not mean it. You have everything in life before you. Say some word to me more comfortable than that. You cannot think how I have looked forward to meeting you again. It has robbed the last month of half its sadness." He put his arm round her waist and pressed her to his side, but he said nothing. "It was so good of you to go to him as you did. How was he looking?"

"Twenty years older than when you saw him last."

"But how in health?"

"He was thin and haggard."

"Was he pale?"

"No; flushed and red. He had not shaved himself for days; nor, as I believe, had he been out of his room since he came up to London. I fancy that he will not live long."

"Poor fellow;—unhappy man! I was very wrong to marry him, Phineas."

"I have never said so;—nor, indeed, thought so."

"But I have thought so; and I say it also,—to you. I owe him any reparation that I can make him; but I could not have lived with him. I had no idea, before, that the nature of two human beings could be so unlike. I so often remember what you told me of him,—here; in this house, when I first brought you together. Alas, how sad it has been!"

"Sad, indeed."

"But can this be true that you tell me of yourself?"

"It is quite true. I could not say so before your father, but it is Mr. Bonteen's doing. There is no remedy. I am sure of that. I am only afraid that people are interfering for me in a manner that will be as disagreeable to me as it will be useless."

"What friends?" she asked.

He was still standing with his arm round her waist, and he did not like to mention the name of Madame Goesler.

"The Duchess of Omnium,—whom you remember as Lady Glencora Palliser."

"Is she a friend of yours?"

"No;—not particularly. But she is an indiscreet woman, and hates Bonteen, and has taken it into her stupid head to interest herself in my concerns. It is no doing of mine, and yet I cannot help it."

"She will succeed."

"I don't want assistance from such a quarter; and I feel sure that she will not succeed."

"What will you do, Phineas?"

"What shall I do? Carry on the battle as long as I can without getting into debt, and then—vanish."

"You vanished once before,—did you not,—with a wife?"

"And now I shall vanish alone. My poor little wife! It seems all like a dream. She was so good, so pure, so pretty, so loving!"

"Loving! A man's love is so easily transferred;—as easily as a woman's hand;—is it not, Phineas? Say the word, for it is what you are thinking."

"I was thinking of no such thing."

"You must think it. You need not be afraid to reproach me. I could bear it from you. What could I not bear from you? Oh, Phineas;—if I had only known myself then, as I do now!"

"It is too late for regrets," he said. There was something in the words which grated on her feelings, and induced her at length to withdraw herself from his arm. Too late for regrets! She had never told herself that it was not too late. She was the wife of another man, and therefore, surely it was too late. But still the word coming from his mouth was painful to her. It seemed to signify that for him at least the game was all over.

"Yes, indeed," she said,—"if our regrets and remorse were at our own disposal! You might as well say that it is too late for unhappiness, too late for weariness, too late for all the misery that comes from a life's disappointment."

"I should have said that indulgence in regrets is vain."

"That is a scrap of philosophy which I have heard so often before! But we will not quarrel, will we, on the first day of my return?"

"I hope not."

"And I may speak to Barrington?"

"No; certainly not."

"But I shall. How can I help it? He will be here to-morrow, and will be full of the coming changes. How should I not mention your name! He knows —not all that has passed, but too much not to be aware of my anxiety. Of course your name will come up?"

"What I request,—what I demand is, that you ask no favour for me. Your father will miss you,—will he not? I had better go now."

"Good night, Phineas."

"Good night, dear friend."

"Dearest, dearest friend," she said. Then he left her, and without assistance let himself out into the square. In her intercourse with him there was a passion the expression of which caused him sorrow and almost dismay. He did not say so even to himself, but he felt that a time might come in which she would resent the coldness of demeanour which it would be imperative upon him to adopt in his intercourse with her. He knew how imprudent he had been to stand there with his arm round her waist.

CHAPTER XII.

CAGLIOSTRO.

It had been settled that Parliament should meet on the Thursday in Easter week, and it was known to the world at large that Cabinet councils were held on the Friday previous, on the Monday, and on the Tuesday; but nobody knew what took place at those meetings. Cabinet councils are, of course, very secret. What kind of oath the members take not to divulge any tittle of the proceedings at these awful conferences, the general public does not know; but it is presumed that oaths are taken very solemn, and it is known that they are very binding. Nevertheless, it is not an uncommon thing to hear openly at the clubs an account of what has been settled; and, as we all know, not a council is held as to which the editor of the People's Banner does not inform its readers next day exactly what took place. But as to these three Cabinet councils there was an increased mystery abroad. Statements, indeed, were made, very definite and circumstantial, but then they were various,—and directly opposed one to another. According to the People's Banner, Mr. Daubeny had resolved, with that enduring courage which was his peculiar characteristic, that he would not be overcome by faction, but would continue to exercise all the functions of Prime Minister until he had had an opportunity of learning whether his great measure had been opposed by the sense of the country,

or only by the tactics of an angry and greedy party. Other journals declared that the ministry as a whole had decided on resigning. But the clubs were in a state of agonising doubt. At the great stronghold of conservative policy in Pall Mall men were silent, embarrassed, and unhappy. The party was at heart divorced from its leaders,—and a party without leaders is powerless. To these gentlemen there could be no triumph, whether Mr. Daubeny went out or remained in office. They had been betrayed;—but as a body were unable even to accuse the traitor. As regarded most of them, they had accepted the treachery and bowed their heads beneath it by means of their votes. And as to the few who had been staunch,—they also were cowed by a feeling that they had been instrumental in destroying their own power by endeavouring to protect a doomed institution. Many a thriving country member in those days expressed a wish among his friends that he had never meddled with the affairs of public life, and hinted at the Chiltern Hundreds. On the other side, there was undoubtedly something of a rabid desire for immediate triumph, which almost deserved that epithet of greedy which was then commonly used by conservatives in speaking of their opponents. With the liberal leaders, such men as Mr. Gresham and the two Dukes,—the anxiety displayed was no doubt on behalf of the country. It is right, according to our Constitution, that the Government should be entrusted to the hands of those whom the constituencies of the country have most trusted. And, on behalf of the country, it behoves the men in whom the country has placed its trust to do battle in season and out of season,—to carry on war internecine,—till

the demands of the country are obeyed. A sound political instinct had induced Mr. Gresham on this occasion to attack his opponent simply on the ground of his being the leader only of a minority in the House of Commons. But from among Mr. Gresham's friends there had arisen a noise which sounded very like a clamour for place, and this noise of course became aggravated in the ears of those who were to be displaced. Now, during Easter week, the clamour became very loud. Could it be possible that the arch-fiend of a Minister would dare to remain in office till the end of a hurried session, and then again dissolve Parliament? Men talked of rows in London,—even of revolution, and there were meetings in open places both by day and night. Petitions were to be prepared, and the country was to be made to express itself.

When, however, Thursday afternoon came, Mr. Daubeny "threw up the sponge." Up to the last moment the course which he intended to pursue was not known to the country at large. He entered the House very slowly,—almost with a languid air, as though indifferent to its performances, and took his seat at about half-past four. Every man there felt that there was insolence in his demeanour,—and yet there was nothing on which it was possible to fasten in the way of expressed complaint. There was a faint attempt at a cheer,—for good soldiers acknowledged the importance of supporting even an unpopular general. But Mr. Daubeny's soldiers on this occasion were not very good. When he had been seated about five minutes, he rose, still very languidly, and began his statement. He and his colleagues, he said, in their attempt to legislate for the good of their country had been beaten

in regard to a very great measure by a large majority, and in compliance with what he acknowledged to be the expressed opinion of the House, he had considered it to be his duty,—as his colleagues had considered it to be theirs,—to place their joint resignations in the hands of Her Majesty. This statement was received with considerable surprise, as it was not generally known that Mr. Daubeny had as yet even seen the Queen. But the feeling most predominant in the House was one,—almost of dismay at the man's quiescence. He and his colleagues had resigned, and he had recommended Her Majesty to send for Mr. Gresham. He spoke in so low a voice as to be hardly audible to the House at large, and then paused,—ceasing to speak, as though his work were done. He even made some gesture, as though stepping back to his seat;—deceived by which Mr. Gresham, at the other side of the table, rose to his legs. "Perhaps," said Mr. Daubeny,—"Perhaps the right honourable gentleman would pardon him, and the House would pardon him, if still, for a moment, he interposed between the House and the right honourable gentleman. He could well understand the impatience of the right honourable gentleman,—who no doubt was anxious to reassume that authority among them, the temporary loss of which he had not perhaps borne with all the equanimity which might have been expected from him. He would promise the House and the right honourable gentleman that he would not detain them long." Mr. Gresham threw himself back into his seat, evidently not without annoyance, and his enemy stood for a moment looking at him. Unless they were angels these two men must at that moment have hated each

other;—and it is supposed that they were no more than human. It was afterwards said that the little ruse of pretending to resume his seat had been deliberately planned by Mr. Daubeny with the view of seducing Mr. Gresham into an act of seeming impatience, and that these words about his opponent's failing equanimity had been carefully prepared.

Mr. Daubeny stood for a minute silent, and then began to pour forth that which was really his speech on the occasion. Those flaccid half-pronounced syllables in which he had declared that he had resigned,—had been studiously careless, purposely flaccid. It was his duty to let the House know the fact, and he did his duty. But now he had a word to say in which he himself could take some little interest. Mr. Daubeny could be fiery or flaccid as it suited himself:—and now it suited him to be fiery. He had a prophecy to make, and prophets have ever been energetic men. Mr. Daubeny conceived it to be his duty, to inform the House, and through the House the country, and now, at last, had the day of ruin come upon the British Empire, because it had bowed itself to the dominion of an unscrupulous and greedy faction. It cannot be said that the language which he used was unmeasured, because no word that he uttered would have warranted the Speaker in calling him to order; but, within the very wide bounds of parliamentary etiquette, there was no limit to the reproach and reprobation which he heaped on the House of Commons for its late vote. And his audacity equalled his insolence. In announcing his resignation, he had condescended to speak of himself and his colleagues; but now he dropped his colleagues as though they were unworthy

of his notice, and spoke only of his own doings,—of his own efforts to save the country, which was indeed willing to be saved, but unable to select fitting instruments of salvation. "He had been twitted," he said, "with inconsistency to his principles by men who were simply unable to understand the meaning of the word conservatism. These gentlemen seemed to think that any man who did not set himself up as an apostle of constant change must therefore be bound always to stand still and see his country perish from stagnation. It might be that there were gentlemen in that House whose timid natures could not face the dangers of any movement; but for himself he would say that no word had ever fallen from his lips which justified either his friends or his adversaries in classing him among the number. If a man be anxious to keep his fire alight, does he refuse to touch the sacred coals as in the course of nature they are consumed? Or does he remove them with the salutary poker and add fresh fuel from the basket? They all knew that enemy to the comfort of the domestic hearth, who could not keep his hands for a moment from the fire-irons. Perhaps he might be justified if he said that they had been very much troubled of late in that House by gentlemen who could not keep their fingers from poker and tongs. But there had now fallen upon them a trouble of a nature much more serious in its effects than any that had come or could come from would-be reformers. A spirit of personal ambition, a wretched thirst for office, a hankering after the power and privileges of ruling, had not only actuated men,—as, alas, had been the case since first the need for men to govern others had arisen in the world,—but had been openly

avowed and put forward as an adequate and sufficient reason for opposing a measure in disapprobation of which no single argument had been used! The right honourable gentleman's proposition to the House had been simply this;— 'I shall oppose this measure, be it good or bad, because I desire myself to be Prime Minister, and I call upon those whom I lead in politics to assist me in doing so, in order that they may share the good things on which we may thus be enabled to lay our hands!'"

Then there arose a great row in the House, and there seemed to be a doubt whether the still existing Minister of the day would be allowed to continue his statement. Mr. Gresham rose to his feet, but sat down again instantly, without having spoken a word that was audible. Two or three voices were heard calling upon the Speaker for protection. It was, however, asserted afterwards that nothing had been said which demanded the Speaker's interference. But all moderate voices were soon lost in the enraged clamour of members on each side. The insolence showered upon those who generally supported Mr. Daubeny had equalled that with which he had exasperated those opposed to him; and as the words had fallen from his lips, there had been no purpose of cheering him from the conservative benches. But noise creates noise, and shouting is a ready and easy mode of contest. For a while it seemed as though the right side of the Speaker's chair was only beaten by the majority of lungs on the left side;—and in the midst of it all Mr. Daubeny still stood, firm on his feet, till gentlemen had shouted themselves silent,—and then he resumed his speech.

The remainder of what he said was profound, prophetic, and unintelligible. The gist of it, so far as it could be understood when the bran was bolted from it, consisted in an assurance that the country had now reached that period of its life in which rapid decay was inevitable, and that, as the mortal disease had already shown itself in its worst form, national decrepitude was imminent, and natural death could not long be postponed. They who attempt to read the prophecy with accuracy were of opinion that the prophet had intimated that had the nation, even in this its crisis, consented to take him, the prophet, as its sole physician and to obey his prescription with childlike docility, health might not only have been re-established, but a new juvenescence absolutely created. The nature of the medicine that should have been taken was even supposed to have been indicated in some very vague terms. Had he been allowed to operate he would have cut the tap-roots of the national cancer, have introduced fresh blood into the national veins, and resuscitated the national digestion, and he seemed to think that the nation, as a nation, was willing enough to undergo the operation, and be treated as he should choose to treat it;—but that the incubus of Mr. Gresham, backed by an unworthy House of Commons, had prevented, and was preventing, the nation from having its own way. Therefore the nation must be destroyed. Mr. Daubeny, as soon as he had completed his speech, took up his hat and stalked out of the House.

It was supposed at the time that the retiring Prime Minister had intended, when he rose to his legs not only to denounce his opponents, but also to separate himself from his own unworthy associates. Men said

that he had become disgusted with politics, disappointed, and altogether demoralised by defeat, and great curiosity existed as to the steps which might be taken at the time by the party of which he had hitherto been the leader. On that evening, at any rate, nothing was done. When Mr. Daubeny was gone, Mr. Gresham rose and said that in the present temper of the House he thought it best to postpone any statement from himself. He had received Her Majesty's commands only as he had entered that House, and in obedience to those commands, he should wait upon Her Majesty early to-morrow. He hoped to be able to inform the House at the afternoon sitting, what was the nature of the commands with which Her Majesty might honour him.

"What do you think of that?" Phineas asked Mr. Monk as they left the House together.

"I think that our Chatham of to-day is but a very poor copy of him who misbehaved a century ago."

"Does not the whole thing distress you?"

"Not particularly. I have always felt that there has been a mistake about Mr. Daubeny. By many he has been accounted as a statesman, whereas to me he has always been a political Cagliostro. Now a conjuror is, I think, a very pleasant fellow to have among us, if we know that he is a conjuror;—but a conjuror who is believed to do his tricks without sleight of hand is a dangerous man. It is essential that such a one should be found out and known to be a conjuror,—and I hope that such knowledge may have been communicated to some men this afternoon."

"He was very great," said Rattler to Bonteen. "Did you not think so?"

"Yes, I did,—very powerful indeed. But the party is broken up to atoms."

"Atoms soon come together again in politics," said Rattler. "They can't do without him. They have n't got anybody else. I wonder what he did when he got home."

"Had some gruel and went to bed," said Bonteen. "They say these scenes in the House never disturb him at home." From which conversations it may be inferred that Mr. Monk and Messrs. Rattler and Bonteen did not agree in their ideas respecting political conjurors.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE PRIME MINISTER IS HARD PRESSED.

It can never be a very easy thing to form a ministry. The one chosen chief is readily selected. Circumstances, indeed, have probably left no choice in the matter. Every man in the country who has at all turned his thoughts that way knows very well who will be the next Prime Minister when it comes to pass that a change is imminent. In these days the occupant of the throne can have no difficulty. Mr. Gresham recommends Her Majesty to send for Mr. Daubeny, or Mr. Daubeny for Mr. Gresham,—as some ten or a dozen years since Mr. Mildmay told her to send for Lord De Terrier, or Lord De Terrier for Mr. Mildmay. The Prime Minister is elected by the nation, but the nation, except in rare cases, cannot go below that in arranging details, and the man for whom the Queen sends is burdened with the necessity of selecting his colleagues. It may be,—probably must always be the case,—that this, that, and the other colleagues are clearly indicated to his mind, but then each of these colleagues may want his own inferior coadjutors, and so the difficulty begins, increases, and at length culminates. On the present occasion it was known at the end of a week that Mr. Gresham had not filled all his offices, and that there were difficulties. It was announced that the Duke of St. Bungay could not quite agree on certain points with

Mr. Gresham, and that the Duke of Omnium would do nothing without the other Duke. The Duke of St. Bungay was very powerful, as there were three or four of the old adherents of Mr. Mildmay who would form no Government unless he was with them. Sir Harry Coldfoot and Lord Plinlimmon would not accept office without the Duke. The Duke was essential, and now though the Duke's character was essentially that of a practical man who never raised unnecessary trouble, men said that the Duke was at the bottom of it all. The Duke did not approve of Mr. Bonteen. Mr. Gresham, so it was said, insisted on Mr. Bonteen,—appealing to the other Duke. But that other Duke, our own special Duke, Planty Pall that was, instead of standing up for Mr. Bonteen, was cold and unsympathetic. He could not join the ministry without his friend, the Duke of St. Bungay, and as to Mr. Bonteen, he thought that perhaps a better selection might be made.

Such were the club rumours which took place as to the difficulties of the day, and, as is generally the case, they were not far from the truth. Neither of the Dukes had absolutely put a veto on poor Mr. Bonteen's elevation, but they had expressed themselves dissatisfied with the appointment, and the younger Duke had found himself called upon to explain that although he had been thrown much into communication with Mr. Bonteen he had never himself suggested that that gentleman should follow him at the Exchequer. This was one of the many difficulties which beset the Prime Minister elect in the performance of his arduous duty.

Lady Glencora, as people would still persist in calling her, was at the bottom of it all. She had sworn an oath inimical to Mr. Bonteen, and did not leave a stone

unturned in her endeavors to accomplish it. If Phineas Finn might find acceptance, then Mr. Bonteen might be allowed to enter Elysium. A second Juno, she would allow the Romulus she hated to sit in the seats of the blessed, to be fed with nectar, and to have his name printed in the lists of unruffled Cabinet meetings,—but only on conditions. Phineas Finn must be allowed a seat also, and a little nectar,—though it were at the second table of the gods. For this she struggled, speaking her mind boldly to this and that member of her husband's party, but she struggled in vain. She could obtain no assurance on behalf of Phineas Finn. The Duke of St. Bungay would do nothing for her. Barrington Erle had declared himself powerless. Her husband had condescended to speak to Mr. Bonteen himself, and Mr. Bonteen's insolent answer had been reported to her. Then she went sedulously to work, and before a couple of days were over she did make her husband believe that Mr. Bonteen was not fit to be Chancellor of the Exchequer. This took place before Mr. Daubeny's statement, while the Duke and Duchess of St. Bungay were still at Matching,—while Mr. Bonteen, unconscious of what was being done, was still in the house. Before the two days were over, the Duke of St. Bungay had a very low opinion of Mr. Bonteen, but was quite ignorant of any connection between that low opinion and the fortunes of Phineas Finn.

"Plantagenet, of all your men that are coming up, your Mr. Bonteen is the worst. I often think that you are going down hill, both in character and intellect, but if you go as low as that I shall prefer to cross the water, and live in America." This she said in the presence of the two Dukes.

"What has Mr. Bonteen done?" asked the elder, laughing.

"He was boasting this morning openly of whom he intended to bring with him into the Cabinet." Truth demands that the chronicler should say that this was a positive fib. Mr. Bonteen, no doubt, had talked largely and with indiscretion, but had made no such boast as that of which the Duchess accused him. "Mr. Gresham will get astray if he does n't allow some one to tell him the truth."

She did not press the matter any further then, but what she had said was not thrown away. "Your wife is almost right about that man," the elder Duke said to the younger.

"It 's Mr. Gresham's doing,—not mine," said the younger.

"She is right about Gresham, too," said the elder. "With all his immense intellect and capacity for business, no man wants more looking after."

That evening Mr. Bonteen was singled out by the Duchess for her special attention, and in the presence of all who were there assembled he made himself an ass. He could not save himself from talking about himself when he was encouraged. On this occasion he offended all those feelings of official discretion and personal reticence which had been endeared to the old Duke by the lessons which he had learned from former statesmen and by the experience of his own life. To be quiet, unassuming, almost affectedly modest in any mention of himself, low-voiced, reflecting always more than he resolved, and resolving always more than he said, had been his aim. Conscious of his high rank, and thinking, no doubt, much of the advantages in

public life which his birth and position had given him, still he would never have ventured to speak of his own services as necessary to any Government. That he had really been indispensable to many he must have known, but not to his closest friend would he have said so in plain language. To such a man, the arrogance of Mr. Bonteen was intolerable.

There is probably more of the flavour of political aristocracy to be found still remaining among our liberal leading statesmen than among their opponents. A conservative Cabinet is, doubtless, never deficient in dukes and lords, and the sons of such; but conservative dukes and lords are recruited here and there, and as recruits, are new to the business, whereas among the old whigs a halo of statecraft has, for ages past, so strongly pervaded and enveloped certain great families, that the power in the world of politics thus produced still remains, and is even yet efficacious in creating a feeling of exclusiveness. They say that "misfortune makes men acquainted with strange bedfellows." The old hereditary whig Cabinet Ministers must, no doubt, by this time have learned to feel themselves at home with strange neighbours at their elbows. But still with them something of the feeling of high blood, of rank, and of living in a park with deer about it, remains. They still entertain a pride in their Cabinets, and have, at any rate, not as yet submitted themselves to a conjuror. The Charles James Fox element of liberality still holds its own, and the fragrance of Cavendish is essential. With no man was this feeling stronger than with the Duke of St. Bungay, though he well knew how to keep it in abeyance,—even to the extent of self-sacrifice. Bonteens must creep into the holy places.

"But how about the salary?"

The faces which he loved to see,—born chiefly of other faces he had loved when young,—could not cluster around the sacred table without others which were much less welcome to him. He was wise enough to know that exclusiveness did not suit the nation, though human enough to feel that it would have been pleasant to himself. There must be Bonteens;—but when any Bonteen came up who loomed before his eyes as specially disagreeable, it seemed to him to be a duty to close the door against such a one, if it could be closed without violence. A constant, gentle pressure against the door would tend to keep down the number of the Bonteens.

"I am not sure that you are not going a little too quick in regard to Mr. Bonteen," said the elder Duke to Mr. Gresham before he had finally assented to a proposition originated by himself,—that he should sit in the Cabinet without a portfolio.

"Palliser wishes it," said Mr. Gresham, shortly.

"He and I think that there has been some mistake about that. You suggested the appointment to him, and he felt unwilling to raise an objection without giving the matter very mature consideration. You can understand that."

"Upon my word I thought that the selection would be peculiarly agreeable to him." Then the Duke made a suggestion. Could not some special office at the Treasury be constructed for Mr. Bonteen's acceptance, having special reference to the question of decimal coinage?

"But how about the salary?" asked Mr. Gresham. "I could n't propose a new office with a salary above £2,000."

"Could n't we make it permanent," suggested the Duke;—"with permission to hold a seat if he can get one?"

"I fear not," said Mr. Gresham.

"He got into a very unpleasant scrape when he was Financial Secretary," said the Duke.

> But whither would'st thou, Muse? Unmeet
> For jocund lyre are themes like these.
> Shalt thou the talk of gods repeat,
> Debasing by thy strains effete
> Such lofty mysteries?

The absolute words of a conversation so lofty shall no longer be attempted, but it may be said that Mr. Gresham was too wise to treat as of no account the objections of such a one as the Duke of St. Bungay. He saw Mr. Bonteen, and he saw the other Duke, and difficulties arose. Mr. Bonteen made himself very disagreeable indeed. As Mr. Bonteen had never absolutely been as yet more than a demigod, our Muse, light as she is, may venture to report that he told Mr. Rattler that "he 'd be d——d if he 'd stand it. If he were to be thrown over now, he 'd make such a row, and would take such care that the fat should be in the fire, that his enemies, whoever they were, should wish that they had kept their fingers off him. He knew who was doing it." If he did not know, his guess was right. In his heart he accused the young Duchess, though he mentioned her name to no one. And it was the young Duchess. Then there was made an insidious proposition to Mr. Gresham,—which reached him at last through Barrington Erle,—that matters would go quieter if Phineas Finn were placed in his old office at

the Colonies instead of Lord Fawn, whose name had been suggested, and for whom,—as Barrington Erle declared,—no one cared a brass farthing. Mr. Gresham when he heard this, thought that he began to smell a rat, and was determined to be on his guard. Why should the appointment of Mr. Phineas Finn make things go easier in regard to Mr. Bonteen? There must be some woman's fingers in the pie. Now Mr. Gresham was firmly resolved that no woman's fingers should have anything to do with his pie.

How the thing went on from bad to worse, it would be bootless here to tell. Neither of the two Dukes absolutely refused to join the ministry; but they were persistent in their objection to Mr. Bonteen, and were joined in it by Lord Plinlimmon and Sir Harry Coldfoot. It was in vain that Mr. Gresham urged that he had no other man ready and fit to be Chancellor of the Exchequer. That excuse could not be accepted. There was Legge Wilson, who twelve years since had been at the Treasury, and would do very well. Now Mr. Gresham had always personally hated Legge Wilson,—and had, therefore, offered him the Board of Trade. Legge Wilson had disgusted him by accepting it, and the name had already been published in connection with the office. But in the lists which had appeared towards the end of the week, no name was connected with the office of Chancellor of the Exchequer, and no office was connected with the name of Mr. Bonteen. The editor of the People's Banner, however, expressed the gratification of that journal that even Mr. Gresham had not dared to propose Mr. Phineas Finn for any place under the Crown.

At last Mr. Bonteen was absolutely told that he

could not be Chancellor of the Exchequer. If he would consent to give his very valuable services to the country with the view of carrying through Parliament the great measure of decimal coinage he should be President of the Board of Trade,—but without a seat in the Cabinet. He would thus become the right honourable Bonteen, which, no doubt, would be a great thing for him,—and, not busy in the Cabinet, must be able to devote his time exclusively to the great measure above-named. What was to become of "Trade" generally, was not specially explained; but, as we all know, there would be a vice-president to attend to details.

The proposition very nearly broke the man's heart. With a voice stopped by agitation, with anger flashing from his eyes, almost in a convulsion of mixed feelings, he reminded his chief of what had been said about his appointment in the House. Mr. Gresham had already absolutely defended it. After that did Mr. Gresham mean to withdraw a promise that had so formally been made? But Mr. Gresham was not to be caught in that way. He had made no promise;—had not even stated to the House that such appointment was to be made. A very improper question had been asked as to a rumour,—in answering which he had been forced to justify himself by explaining that discussions respecting the office had been necessary. "Mr. Bonteen," said Mr. Gresham, "no one knows better than you the difficulties of a Minister. If you can act with us I shall be very grateful to you. If you cannot, I shall regret the loss of your services." Mr. Bonteen took twenty-four hours to consider, and was then appointed President of the Board of Trade, without a seat in the

Cabinet. Mr. Legge Wilson became Chancellor of the Exchequer. When the lists were completed, no office whatever was assigned to Phineas Finn. "I have n't done with Mr. Bonteen yet," said the young Duchess to her friend Madame Goesler.

The secrets of the world are very marvellous, but they are not themselves half so wonderful as the way in which they become known to the world. There could be no doubt that Mr. Bonteen's high ambition had foundered, and that he had been degraded through the secret enmity of the Duchess of Omnium. It was equally certain that his secret enmity to Phineas Finn had brought this punishment on his head. But before the ministry had been a week in office almost everybody knew that it was so. The rumours were full of falsehood, but yet they contained the truth. The Duchess had done it. The Duchess was the bosom friend of Lady Laura Kennedy, who was in love with Phineas Finn. She had gone on her knees to Mr. Gresham to get a place for her friend's favourite, and Mr. Gresham had refused. Consequently at her bidding, half-a-dozen embryo Ministers—her husband among the number—had refused to be amenable to Mr. Gresham. Mr. Gresham had at last consented to sacrifice Mr. Bonteen, who had originally instigated him to reject the claims of Phineas Finn. That the degradation of the one man had been caused by the exclusion of the other all the world knew.

"It shuts the door to me for ever and ever," said Phineas to Madame Goesler.

"I don't see that."

"Of course it does. Such an affair places a mark against a man's name which will never be forgotten."

"Is your heart set upon holding some trifling appointment under a Minister?"

"To tell you the truth it is;—or rather it was. The prospect of office to me was more than perhaps to any other expectant. Even this man, Bonteen, has some fortune of his own, and can live if he be excluded. I have given up everything for the chance of something in this line."

"Other lines are open."

"Not to me, Madame Goesler. I do not mean to defend myself. I have been very foolish, very sanguine, and am now very unhappy."

"What shall I say to you?"

"The truth."

"In truth, then, I do not sympathise with you. The thing lost is too small, too mean, to justify unhappiness."

"But Madame Goesler, you are a rich woman."

"Well?"

"If you were to lose it all, would you not be unhappy? It has been my ambition to live here in London as one of a special set which dominates all other sets in our English world. To do so a man should have means of his own. I have none; and yet I have tried it,—thinking that I could earn my bread at it as men do at other professions. I acknowledge that I should not have thought so. No man should attempt what I have attempted without means, at any rate to live on if he fail; but I am not the less unhappy because I have been silly."

"What will you do?"

"Ah,—what? Another friend asked me that the other day, and I told her that I should vanish."

"Who was that friend?"

"Lady Laura."

"She is in London again now?"

"Yes; she and her father are in Portman Square."

"She has been an injurious friend to you."

"No, by Heaven," exclaimed Phineas. "But for her I should never have been here at all, never have had a seat in Parliament, never have been in office, never have known you."

"And might have been the better without any of these things."

"No man ever had a better friend than Lady Laura has been to me. Malice, wicked and false as the devil, has lately joined our names together to the incredible injury of both of us; but it has not been her fault."

"You are energetic in defending her."

"And so would she be in defending me. Circumstances threw us together and made us friends. Her father and her brother were my friends. I happened to be of service to her husband. We belonged to the same party. And therefore,—because she has been unfortunate in her marriage,—people tell lies of her."

"It is a pity he should—not die, and leave her," said Madame Goesler, slowly.

"Why so?"

"Because then you might justify yourself in defending her by making her your wife." She paused, but he made no answer to this. "You are in love with her," she said.

"It is untrue."

"Mr. Finn!"

"Well, what would you have? I am not in love with her. To me she is no more than my sister. Were she as free as air I should not ask her to be my wife.

Can a man and woman feel no friendship without being in love with each other?"

"I hope they may," said Madame Goesler. Had he been lynx-eyed he might have seen that she blushed; but it required quick eyes to discover a blush on Madame Goesler's face. "You and I are friends."

"Indeed we are," he said, grasping her hand as he took his leave.

CHAPTER XIV.

"I HOPE I 'M NOT DISTRUSTED."

GERARD MAULE, as the reader has been informed, wrote three lines to his dearest Adelaide to inform her that his father would not assent to the suggestion respecting Maule Abbey which had been made by Lady Chiltern, and then took no further steps in the matter. In the fortnight next after the receipt of his letter nothing was heard of him at Harrington Hall, and Adelaide, though she made no complaint, was unhappy. Then came the letter from Mr. Spooner,—with all its rich offers, and Adelaide's mind was for a while occupied with wrath against her second suitor. But as the egregious folly of Mr. Spooner, for to her thinking the aspirations of Mr. Spooner were egregiously foolish,—died out of her mind, her thoughts reverted to her engagement. Why did not the man come to her, or why did he not write ?

She had received from Lady Chiltern an invitation to remain with them,—the Chilterns,—till her marriage. "But, dear Lady Chiltern, who knows when it will be?" Adelaide had said. Lady Chiltern had good-naturedly replied that the longer it was put off the better for herself. "But you 'll be going to London or abroad before that day comes." Lady Chiltern declared that she looked forward to no festivities which could under any circumstances remove her four-and-twenty hours' travelling distance from the kennels. Probably she

might go up to London for a couple of months as soon as the hunting was over, and the hounds had been drafted, and the horses had been coddled, and every covert had been visited. From the month of May till the middle of July she might, perhaps, be allowed to be in town, as communications by telegram could now be made day and night. After that, preparations for cub-hunting would be imminent, and, as a matter of course, it would be necessary that she should be at Harrington Hall at so important a period of the year. During those couple of months she would be very happy to have the companionship of her friend, and she hinted that Gerard Maule would certainly be in town. "I begin to think it would have been better that I should never have seen Gerard Maule," said Adelaide Palliser.

This happened about the middle of March, while hunting was still in force. Gerard's horses were standing in the neighbourhood, but Gerard himself was not there. Mr. Spooner, since that short, disheartening note had been sent to him by Lord Chiltern, had not been seen at Harrington. There was a Harrington Lawn Meet on one occasion, but he had not appeared till the hounds were at the neighbouring covert side. Nevertheless, he had declared that he did not intend to give up the pursuit, and had even muttered something of the sort to Lord Chiltern. "I am one of those fellows who stick to a thing, you know," he said.

"I am afraid you had better give up sticking to her, because she 's going to marry somebody else."

"I 've heard all about that, my lord. He 's a very nice sort of young man, but I 'm told he has n't got his house ready yet for a family." All which Lord Chil-

tern repeated to his wife. Neither of them spoke to Adelaide again about Mr. Spooner; but this did cause a feeling in Lady Chiltern's mind that perhaps this engagement with young Maule was a foolish thing, and that, if so, she was in a great measure responsible for the folly.

"Don't you think you 'd better write to him?" she said, one morning.

"Why does he not write to me?"

"But he did,—when he told you that his father would not consent to give up the house. You did not answer him then."

"It was two lines,—without a date. I don't even know where he lives."

"You know his club?"

"Yes,—I know his club. I do feel, Lady Chiltern, that I have become engaged to marry a man as to whom I am altogether in the dark. I don't like writing to him at his club."

"You have seen more of him here and in Italy than most girls see of their future husbands."

"So I have,—but I have seen no one belonging to him. Don't you understand what I mean? I feel all at sea about him. I am sure he does not mean any harm."

"Certainly he does not."

"But then he hardly means any good."

"I never saw a man more earnestly in love," said Lady Chiltern.

"Oh yes,—he 's quite enough in love. But——"

"But what?"

"He 'll just remain up in London thinking about it, and never tell himself that there 's anything to be done. And then, down here, what is my best hope?

Not that he 'll come to see me, but that he 'll come to see his horse, and that so, perhaps, I may get a word with him." Then Lady Chiltern suggested, with a laugh, that perhaps it might have been better that she should have accepted Mr. Spooner. There would have been no doubt as to Mr. Spooner's energy and purpose. "Only that if there were not another man in the world I would n't marry him, and that I never saw any other man except Gerard Maule whom I even fancied I could marry."

About a fortnight after this, when the hunting was all over, in the beginning of April, she did write to him as follows, and did direct her letter to his club. In the meantime, Lord Chiltern had intimated to his wife that if Gerard Maule behaved badly he should consider himself to be standing in the place of Adelaide's father or brother. His wife pointed out to him that were he her father or her brother he could do nothing,—that in these days let a man behave ever so badly, no means of punishing was within reach of the lady's friends. But Lord Chiltern would not assent to this. He muttered something about a horsewhip, and seemed to suggest that one man could, if he were so minded, always have it out with another, if not in this way, then in that. Lady Chiltern protested, and declared that horsewhips could not under any circumstances be efficacious. "He had better mind what he is about," said Lord Chiltern. It was after this that Adelaide wrote her letter:—

"Harrington Hall, 5th April.

"Dear Gerard,—I have been thinking that I should hear from you, and have been surprised,—I may say

unhappy,—because I have not done so. Perhaps you thought I ought to have answered the three words which you wrote to me about your father; if so, I will apologise; only they did not seem to give me anything to say. I was very sorry that your father should have 'cut up rough,' as you call it, but you must remember that we both expected that he would refuse, and that we are only therefore where we thought we should be. I suppose we shall have to wait till Providence does something for us,—only, if so, it would be pleasanter to me to hear your own opinion about it.

"The Chilterns are surprised that you should n't have come back, and seen the end of the season. There were some very good runs just at last;—particularly one on last Monday. But on Wednesday Trumpeton Wood was again blank, and there was some row about wires. I can't explain it all; but you must come, and Lord Chiltern will tell you. I have gone down to see the horses ever so often;—but I don't care to go now, as you never write to me. They are all three quite well, and Fan looks as silken and as soft as any lady need do.

"Lady Chiltern has been kinder than I can tell you. I go up to town with her in May, and shall remain with her while she is there. So far I have decided. After that my future home must, sir, depend on the resolution and determination, or perhaps on the vagaries and caprices, of him who is to be my future master. Joking apart, I must know to what I am to look forward before I can make up my mind whether I will or will not go back to Italy towards the end of the summer. If I do, I fear I must do so just in the hottest time of the year; but I shall not like to come

down here again after leaving London,—unless something by that time has been settled.

"I shall send this to your club, and I hope that it will reach you. I suppose that you are in London.

"Good-bye, dearest Gerard.

"Yours most affectionately,

"ADELAIDE.

"If there is anything that troubles you, pray tell me. I ask you because I think it would be better for you that I should know. I sometimes think that you would have written if there had not been some misfortune. God bless you."

Gerard was in London, and sent the following note by return of post:—

"——— Club, Tuesday.

"Dearest Adelaide,—All right. If Chiltern can take me for a couple of nights, I 'll come down next week, and settle about the horses, and will arrange everything.

"Ever your own, with all my heart,

"G. M."

"He will settle about his horses, and arrange everything," said Adelaide, as she showed the letter to Lady Chiltern. "The horses first, and everything afterwards. The everything, of course, includes all my future happiness, the day of my marriage, whether to-morrow or in ten years' time, and the place where we shall live."

"At any rate, he 's coming."

"Yes;—but when? He says next week, but he does not name any day. Did you ever hear or see anything so unsatisfactory?"

"I thought you would be glad to see him."

"So I should be,—if there was any sense in him. I shall be glad, and shall kiss him."

"I dare say you will."

"And let him put his arm round my waist and be happy. He will be happy because he will think of nothing beyond. But what is to be the end of it?"

"He says that he will settle everything."

"But he will have thought of nothing. What must I settle? That is the question. When he was told to go to his father, he went to his father. When he failed there the work was done, and the trouble was off his mind. I know him so well."

"If you think so ill of him why did you consent to get into his boat?" said Lady Chiltern, seriously.

"I don't think ill of him. Why do you say that I think ill of him? I think better of him than of anybody else in the world;—but I know his fault, and, as it happens, it is a fault so very prejudicial to my happiness. You ask me why I got into his boat. Why does any girl get into a man's boat? Why did you get into Lord Chiltern's?"

"I promised to marry him when I was seven years old;—so he says."

"But you would n't have done it, if you had n't had a sort of feeling that you were born to be his wife. I have n't got into this man's boat yet; but I never can be happy unless I do, simply because——"

"You love him."

"Yes;—just that. I have a feeling that I should like to be in his boat, and I should n't like to be anywhere else. After you have come to feel like that about a man I don't suppose it makes any difference

whether you think him perfect or imperfect. He 's just my own,—at least I hope so;—the one thing that I 've got. If I wear a stuff frock, I 'm not going to despise it because it 's not silk."

"Mr. Spooner would be the stuff frock."

"No;—Mr. Spooner is shoddy, and very bad shoddy, too."

On the Saturday in the following week Gerard Maule did arrive at Harrington Hall,—and was welcomed as only accepted lovers are welcomed. Not a word of reproach was uttered as to his delinquencies. No doubt he got the kiss with which Adelaide had herself suggested that his coming would be rewarded. He was allowed to stand on the rug before the fire with his arm round her waist. Lady Chiltern smiled on him. His horses had been specially visited that morning, and a lively report as to their condition was made to him. Not a word was said on that occasion which could distress him. Even Lord Chiltern, when he came in, was gracious to him. "Well, old fellow," he said, "you 've missed your hunting."

"Yes; indeed. Things kept me in town."

"We had some uncommonly good runs."

"Have the horses stood pretty well?" asked Gerard.

"I felt uncommonly tempted to borrow yours; and should have done so once or twice if I had n't known that I should have been betrayed."

"I wish you had, with all my heart," said Gerard. And then they went to dress for dinner.

In the evening when the ladies had gone to bed, Lord Chiltern took his friend off to the smoking-room. At Harrington Hall it was not unusual for the ladies and gentlemen to descend together into the very

comfortable Pandemonium which was so called, when, —as was the case at present,—the terms of intimacy between them was sufficient to warrant such a proceeding. But on this occasion Lady Chiltern went very discreetly upstairs, and Adelaide, with equal discretion, followed her. It had been arranged beforehand that Lord Chiltern should say a salutary word or two to the young man. Maule began about the hunting, asking questions about this and that, but his host stopped him at once. Lord Chiltern, when he had a task on hand, was always inclined to get through it at once,—perhaps with an energy that was too sudden in its effects. "Maule," he said, "you ought to make up your mind what you mean to do about that girl."

"Do about her! How?"

"You and she are engaged, I suppose?"

"Of course we are. There is n't any doubt about it."

"Just so. But when things come to be like that, all delays are good fun to the man, but they 're the very devil to the girl."

"I thought it was always the other way up, and that girls wanted delay?"

"That 's only a theoretical delicacy which never means much. When a girl is engaged she likes to have the day fixed. When there 's a long interval the man can do pretty much as he pleases, while the girl can do nothing except think about him. Then it sometimes turns out that when he 's wanted, he 's not there."

"I hope I 'm not distrusted," said Gerard, with an air that showed that he was almost disposed to be offended.

"Not in the least. The women here think you the finest paladin in the world, and Miss Palliser would fly at my throat if she thought that I said a word against you. But she 's in my house, you see; and I 'm bound to do exactly as I should if she were my sister."

"And if she were your sister?"

"I should tell you that I could n't approve of the engagement unless you were prepared to fix the time of your marriage. And I should ask you where you intended to live."

"Wherever she pleases. I can't go to Maule Abbey while my father lives, without his sanction."

"And he may live for the next twenty years."

"Or thirty."

"Then you are bound to decide upon something else. It 's no use saying that you leave it to her. You can't leave it to her. What I mean is this, that now you are here, I think you are bound to settle something with her. Good night, old fellow."

CHAPTER XV.

BOULOGNE.

Gerard Maule as he sat upstairs, half undressed, in his bedroom that night did n't like it. He hardly knew what it was that he did not like,—but he felt that there was something wrong. He thought that Lord Chiltern had not been warranted in speaking to him with a tone of authority, and in talking of a brother's position,—and the rest of it. He had lacked the presence of mind for saying anything at the moment; but he must say something sooner or later. He was n't going to be driven by Lord Chiltern. When he looked back at his own conduct he thought that it had been more than noble,—almost romantic. He had fallen in love with Miss Palliser, and spoken his love out freely, without any reference to money. He did n't know what more any fellow could have done. As to his marrying out of hand, the day after his engagement, as a man of fortune can do, everybody must have known that that was out of the question. Adelaide of course had known it. It had been suggested to him that he should consult his father as to living at Maule Abbey. Now if there was one thing he hated more than another, it was consulting his father: and yet he had done it. He had asked for a loan of the old house in perfect faith, and it was not his fault that it had been refused. He could not make a house to live in, nor could he coin a fortune. He had £800 a year

of his own, but of course he owed a little money. Men with such incomes always do owe a little money. It was almost impossible that he should marry quite at once. It was not his fault that Adelaide had no fortune of her own. When he fell in love with her he had been a great deal too generous to think of fortune, and that ought to be remembered now to his credit. Such was the sum of his thoughts, and his anger spread itself from Lord Chiltern even on to Adelaide herself. Chiltern would hardly have spoken in that way unless she had complained. She, no doubt, had been speaking to Lady Chiltern, and Lady Chiltern had passed it on to her husband. He would have it out with Adelaide on the next morning,—quite decidedly. And he would make Lord Chiltern understand that he would not endure interference. He was quite ready to leave Harrington Hall at a moment's notice if he were ill-treated. This was the humour in which Gerard Maule put himself to bed that night.

On the following morning he was very late at breakfast,—so late that Lord Chiltern had gone over to the kennel. As he was dressing he had resolved that it would be fitting that he should speak again to his host before he said anything to Adelaide that might appear to impute blame to her. He would ask Chiltern whether anything was meant by what had been said overnight. But, as it happened, Adelaide had been left alone to pour out his tea for him, and,—as the reader will understand to have been certain on such an occasion,—they were left together for an hour in the breakfast parlour. It was impossible that such an hour should be passed without some reference to the grievance which was lying heavy on his heart. "Late;

I should think you are," said Adelaide, laughing. "It is nearly eleven. Lord Chiltern has been out an hour. I suppose you never get up except for hunting."

"People always think it is so wonderfully virtuous to get up. What 's the use of it?"

"Your breakfast is so cold."

"I don't care about that. I suppose they can boil me an egg. I was very seedy when I went to bed."

"You smoked too many cigars, sir."

"No, I did n't; but Chiltern was saying things that I did n't like." Adelaide's face at once became very serious. "Yes, a good deal of sugar, please. I don't care about toast, and anything does for me. He has gone to the kennels, has he?"

"He said he should. What was he saying last night?"

"Nothing particular. He has a way of blowing up, you know; and he looks at one just as if he expected that everybody was to do just what he chooses."

"You did n't quarrel."

"Not at all; I went off to bed without saying a word. I hate jaws. I shall just put it right this morning; that 's all."

"Was it about me, Gerard?"

"It does n't signify the least."

"But it does signify. If you and he were to quarrel would it not signify to me very much! How could I stay here with them, or go up to London with them, if you and he had really quarrelled? You must tell me. I know that it was about me." Then she came and sat close to him. "Gerard," she continued, "I don't think you understand how much everything is to me that concerns you."

When he began to reflect, he could not quite recollect what it was that Lord Chiltern had said to him. He did remember that something had been suggested about a brother and sister which had implied that Adelaide might want protection, but there was nothing unnatural or other than kind in the position which Lord Chiltern had declared that he would assume. "He seemed to think that I was n't treating you well," said he, turning round from the breakfast-table to the fire, "and that is a sort of thing I can't stand."

"I have never said so, Gerard."

"I don't know what it is that he expects, or why he should interfere at all. I can't bear to be interfered with. What does he know about it? He has had somebody to pay everything for him half-a-dozen times, but I have to look out for myself."

"What does all this mean?"

"You would ask me, you know? I am bothered out of my life by ever so many things, and now he comes and adds his botheration."

"What bothers you, Gerard? If anything bothers you, surely you will tell me. If there has been anything to trouble you since you saw your father why have you not written and told me? Is your trouble about me?"

"Well, of course it is, in a sort of way."

"I will not be a trouble to you."

"Now you are going to misunderstand me! Of course, you are not a trouble to me. You know that I love you better than anything in the world."

"I hope so."

"Of course I do." Then he put his arm round her waist and pressed her to his bosom. "But what can a

man do? When Lady Chiltern recommended that I should go to my father and tell him, I did it. I knew that no good could come of it. He would n't lift his hand to do anything for me."

"How horrid that is!"

"He thinks it a shame that I should have my uncle's money, though he never had any more right to it than that man out there. He is always saying that I am better off than he is."

"I suppose you are."

"I am very badly off, I know that. People seem to think that £800 is ever so much, but I find it to be very little."

"And it will be much less if you are married," said Adelaide, gravely.

"Of course, everything must be changed. I must sell my horses, and we must cut and run, and go and live at Boulogne, I suppose. But a man can't do that kind of thing all in a moment. Then Chiltern comes and talks as though he were Virtue personified. What business is it of his?"

Then Adelaide became still more grave. She had now removed herself from his embrace, and was standing a little apart from him on the rug. She did not answer him at first; and when she did so, she spoke very slowly. "We have been rash, I fear; and have done what we have done without sufficient thought."

"I don't say that at all."

"But I do. It does seem now that we have been imprudent." Then she smiled as she completed her speech. "There had better be no engagement between us."

"Why do you say that?"

"Because it is quite clear that it has been a trouble to you rather than a happiness."

"I would n't give it up for all the world."

"But it will be better. I had not thought about it as I should have done. I did not understand that the prospect of marrying would make you—so very poor. I see it now. You had better tell Lord Chiltern that it is—done with, and I will tell her the same. It will be better; and I will go back to Italy at once."

"Certainly not. It is not done with, and it shall not be done with."

"Do you think I will marry the man I love when he tells me that by—marrying—me, he will be—banished to—Bou—logne? You had better see Lord Chiltern; indeed you had." And then she walked out of the room.

Then came upon him at once a feeling that he had behaved badly; and yet he had been so generous, so full of intentions to be devoted and true! He had never for a moment thought of breaking off the match, and would not think of it now. He loved her better than ever, and would live only with the intention of making her his wife. But he certainly should not have talked to her of his poverty, nor should he have mentioned Boulogne. And yet what should he have done? She would cross-question him about Lord Chiltern, and it was so essentially necessary that he should make her understand his real condition. It had all come from that man's unjustifiable interference,—as he would at once go and tell him. Of course he would marry Adelaide, but the marriage must be delayed. Everybody waits twelve months before they are married; and why should she not wait? He was miserable be-

cause he knew that he had made her unhappy;—but the fault had been with Lord Chiltern. He would speak his mind frankly to Chiltern, and then would explain with loving tenderness to his Adelaide that they would still be all in all to each other, but that a short year must elapse before he could put his house in order for her. After that he would sell his horses. That resolve was in itself so great that he did not think it necessary at the present moment to invent any more plans for the future. So he went out into the hall, took his hat, and marched off to the kennels.

At the kennels he found Lord Chiltern surrounded by the denizens of the hunt. His huntsman, with the kennelman and feeder, and two whips, and old Doggett were all there, and the master of the hounds was in the middle of his business. The dogs were divided by ages, as well as by sex, and were being brought out and examined. Old Doggett was giving advice,—differing almost always from Cox, the huntsman, as to the propriety of keeping this hound or of cashiering that. Nose, pace, strength, and docility were all questioned with an eagerness hardly known in any other business; and on each question Lord Chiltern listened to everybody, and then decided with a single word. When he had once resolved, nothing further urged by any man then could avail anything. Jove never was so autocratic, and certainly never so much in earnest. From the look of Lord Chiltern's brow it almost seemed as though this weight of empire must be too much for any mere man. Very little notice was taken of Gerard Maule when he joined the conclave, though it was felt in reference to him that he was sufficiently staunch a friend to the hunt to be trusted with the secrets of the

kennel. Lord Chiltern merely muttered some words of greeting, and Cox lifted the old hunting-cap which he wore. For another hour the conference was held. Those who had attended such meetings know well that a morning on the flags is apt to be a long affair. Old Doggett, who had privileges, smoked a pipe, and Gerard Maule lit one cigar after another. But Lord Chiltern had become too thorough a man of business to smoke when so employed. At last the last order was given,—Doggett snarled his last snarl,—and Cox uttered his last "my lord." Then Gerard Maule and the master left the hounds and walked home together.

The affair had been so long that Gerard had almost forgotten his grievance. But now as they got out together upon the park, he remembered the tone of Adelaide's voice as she left him, and remembered also that, as matters stood at present, it was essentially necessary that something should be said. "I suppose I shall have to go and see that woman," said Lord Chiltern.

"Do you mean Adelaide?" asked Maule, in a tone of infinite surprise.

"I mean this new Duchess, who I 'm told is to manage everything herself. That man Fothergill is going on with just the old game at Trumpeton."

"Is he, indeed? I was thinking of something else just at that moment. You remember what you were saying about Miss Palliser last night."

"Yes."

"Well;—I don't think, you know, you had a right to speak as you did."

Lord Chiltern almost flew at his companion, as he replied, "I said nothing. I do say that when a man becomes engaged to a girl, he should let her hear

from him, so that they may know what each other is about."

"You hinted something about being her brother."

"Of course I did. If you mean well by her, as I hope you do, it can't fret you to think that she has got somebody to look after her till you come in and take possession. It is the commonest thing in the world when a girl is left all alone as she is."

"You seemed to make out that I was n't treating her well."

"I said nothing of the kind, Maule; but if you ask me——"

"I don't ask you anything."

"Yes, you do. You come and find fault with me for speaking last night in the most good-natured way in the world. And, therefore, I tell you now that you will be behaving very badly indeed, unless you make some arrangement at once as to what you mean to do."

"That 's your opinion," said Gerard Maule.

"Yes, it is; and you 'll find it to be the opinion of any man or woman that you may ask who knows anything about such things. And I 'll tell you what, Master Maule, if you think you 're going to face me down you 'll find yourself mistaken. Stop a moment, and just listen to me. You have n't a much better friend than I am, and I 'm sure she has n't a better friend than my wife. All this has taken place under our roof, and I mean to speak my mind plainly. What do you propose to do about your marriage?"

"I don't propose to tell you what I mean to do."

"Will you tell Miss Palliser,—or my wife?"

"That is just as I may think fit."

"Then I must tell you that you cannot meet her at my house."

"I 'll leave it to-day."

"You need n't do that either. You sleep on it, and then make up your mind. You can't suppose that I have any curiosity about it. The girl is fond of you, and I suppose that you are fond of her. Don't quarrel for nothing. If I have offended you, speak to Lady Chiltern about it."

"Very well;—I will speak to Lady Chiltern."

When they reached the house it was clear that something was wrong. Miss Palliser was not seen again before dinner, and Lady Chiltern was grave and very cold in her manner to Gerard Maule. He was left alone all the afternoon, which he passed with his horses and groom, smoking more cigars,—but thinking all the time of Adelaide Palliser's last words, of Lord Chiltern's frown, and Lady Chiltern's manner to him. When he came into the drawing-room before dinner, Lady Chiltern and Adelaide were both there, and Adelaide immediately began to ask questions about the kennel and the huntsmen. But she studiously kept at a distance from him, and he himself felt that it would be impossible to resume at present the footing on which he stood with them both on the previous evening. Presently Lord Chiltern came in, and another man and his wife who had come to stay at Harrington. Nothing could be more dull than the whole evening. At least, so Gerard found it. He did take Adelaide in to dinner, but he did not sit next to her at table, for which, however, there was an excuse, as, had he done so, the newcomer must have been placed by his wife. He was cross, and would not make an attempt to speak to his

neighbour, and, though he tried once or twice to talk to Lady Chiltern—than whom, as a rule, no woman was ever more easy in conversation—he failed altogether. Now and again he strove to catch Adelaide's eye, but even in that he could not succeed. When the ladies left the room, Chiltern and the new-comer—who was not a sporting man, and therefore did not understand the question—became lost in the mazes of Trumpeton Wood. But Gerard Maule did not put in a word; nor was a word addressed to him by Lord Chiltern. As he sat there sipping his wine, he made up his mind that he would leave Harrington Hall the next morning. When he was again in the drawing-room, things were conducted in just the same way. He spoke to Adelaide, and she answered him; but there was no word of encouragement—not a tone of comfort in her voice. He found himself driven to attempt conversation with the strange lady, and at last was made to play whist with Lady Chiltern and the two new-comers. Later on in the evening, when Adelaide had gone to her own chamber, he was invited by Lady Chiltern into her own sitting-room upstairs, and there the whole thing was explained to him. Miss Palliser had declared that the match should be broken off.

"Do you mean altogether, Lady Chiltern?"

"Certainly I do. Such a resolve cannot be a half-and-half arrangement."

"But why?"

"I think you must know why, Mr. Maule."

"I don't in the least. I won't have it broken off. I have as much right to have a voice in the matter as she has, and I don't in the least believe it 's her doing."

"Mr. Maule!"

"I do not care; I must speak out. Why does she not tell me so herself?"

"She did tell you so."

"No, she did n't. She said something, but not that. I don't suppose a man was ever so used before; and it 's all Lord Chiltern;—just because I told him that he had no right to interfere with me. And he has no right."

"You and Oswald were away together when she told me that she had made up her mind. Oswald has hardly spoken to her since you have been in the house. He certainly has not spoken to her about you since you came to us."

"What is the meaning of it, then?"

"You told her that your engagement had overwhelmed you with troubles."

"Of course; there must be troubles."

"And that——you would have to be banished to Boulogne when you were married."

"I did n't mean her to take that literally."

"It was n't a nice way, Mr. Maule, to speak of your future life to the girl to whom you were engaged. Of course it was her hope to make your life happier, not less happy. And when you made her understand—as you did very plainly—that your married prospects filled you with dismay, of course she had no other alternative but to retreat from her engagement."

"I was n't dismayed."

"It is not my doing, Mr. Maule."

"I suppose she 'll see me?"

"If you insist upon it, she will; but she would rather not."

Gerard, however, did insist, and Adelaide was

brought to him there into that room before he went to bed. She was very gentle with him, and spoke to him in a tone very different from that which Lady Chiltern had used; but he found himself utterly powerless to change her. That unfortunate allusion to a miserable exile at Boulogne had completed the work which the former plaints had commenced, and had driven her to a resolution to separate herself from him altogether.

"Mr. Maule," she said, "when I perceived that our proposed marriage was looked upon by you as a misfortune, I could do nothing but put an end to our engagement."

"But I did n't think it a misfortune."

"You made me think that it would be unfortunate for you, and that is quite as strong a reason. I hope we shall part as friends."

"I won't part at all," he said, standing his ground with his back to the fire. "I don't understand it, by Heaven I don't. Because I said some stupid thing about Boulogne, all in joke——"

"It was not in joke when you said that troubles had come heavy upon you since you were engaged."

"A man may be allowed to know himself, whether he was in joke or not. I suppose the truth is, you don't care about me?"

"I hope, Mr. Maule, that in time it may come—— not quite to that."

"I think that you are—using me very badly. I think that you are—behaving—falsely to me. I think that I am—very—shamefully treated—among you. Of course I shall go. Of course I shall not stay in this house. A man can't make a girl keep her promise.

No—I won't shake hands. I won't even say good-bye to you. Of course I shall go." So saying he slammed the door behind him.

"If he cares for you he 'll come back to you," Lady Chiltern said to Adelaide that night, who at the moment was lying on her bed in a sad condition, frantic with headache.

"I don't want him to come back; I will never make him go to Boulogne."

"Don't think of it, dear."

"Not think of it! how can I help thinking of it? I shall always think of it. But I never want to see him again—never! How can I want to marry a man who tells me that I shall be a trouble to him? He shall never,—never have to go to Boulogne for me."

CHAPTER XVI.

THE SECOND THUNDERBOLT.

THE quarrel between Phineas Finn and Mr. Bonteen had now become the talk of the town, and had taken many various phases. The political phase, though it was perhaps the best understood, was not the most engrossing. There was the personal phase,—which had reference to the direct altercation that had taken place between the two gentlemen, and to the correspondence between them which had followed, as to which phase it may be said that though there were many rumours abroad, very little was known. It was reported in some circles that the two aspirants for office had been within an ace of striking each other; in some, again, that a blow had passed,—and in others, further removed probably from the House of Commons and the Universe Club, that the Irishman had struck the Englishman, and that the Englishman had given the Irishman a thrashing. This was a phase that was very disagreeable to Phineas Finn. And there was a third, which may perhaps be called the general social phase, and which unfortunately dealt with the name of Lady Laura Kennedy. They all, of course, worked into each other, and were enlivened and made interesting with the names of a great many big persons. Mr. Gresham, the Prime Minister, was supposed to be very much concerned in this matter. He, it was said, had found himself compelled to exclude Phineas Finn from

the Government, because of the unfortunate alliance between him and the wife of one of his late colleagues, and had also thought it expedient to dismiss Mr. Bonteen from his Cabinet,—for it had amounted almost to dismissal,—because Mr. Bonteen had made indiscreet official allusion to that alliance. In consequence of this working in of the first and third phase, Mr. Gresham encountered hard usage from some friends and from many enemies. Then, of course, the scene at Macpherson's Hotel was commented on very generally. An idea prevailed that Mr. Kennedy, driven to madness by his wife's infidelity, which had become known to him through the quarrel between Phineas and Mr. Bonteen,—had endeavoured to murder his wife's lover, who had with the utmost effrontery invaded the injured husband's presence with a view of deterring him by threats from a publication of his wrongs. This murder had been nearly accomplished in the centre of the metropolis,—by daylight, as if that made it worse, —on a Sunday, which added infinitely to the delightful horror of the catastrophe; and yet no public notice had been taken of it! The would-be murderer had been a Cabinet Minister, and the lover who was so nearly murdered had been an Under Secretary of State, and was even now a member of Parliament. And then it was positively known that the lady's father, who had always been held in the highest respect as a nobleman, favoured his daughter's lover, and not his daughter's husband. All which things together filled the public with dismay, and caused a delightful excitement, giving quite a feature of its own to the season.

No doubt general opinion was adverse to poor Phineas Finn, but he was not without his party in the

matter. To oblige a friend by inflicting an injury on his enemy is often more easy than to confer a benefit on the friend himself. We have already seen how the young Duchess failed in her attempt to obtain an appointment for Phineas, and also how she succeeded in destroying the high hopes of Mr. Bonteen. Having done so much, of course she clung heartily to the side which she had adopted;—and equally, of course, Madame Goesler did the same. Between these two ladies there was a slight difference of opinion as to the nature of the alliance between Lady Laura and their hero. The Duchess was of opinion that young men are, upon the whole, averse to innocent alliances, and that, as Lady Laura and her husband certainly had long been separated, there was probably—something in it. "Lord bless you, my dear," the Duchess said, "they were known to be lovers when they were at Loughlinter together, before she married Mr. Kennedy. It has been the most romantic affair! She made her father give him a seat for his borough."

"He saved Mr. Kennedy's life," said Madame Goesler.

"That was one of the most singular things that ever happened. Laurence Fitzgibbon says that it was all planned—that the garrotters were hired, but unfortunately two policemen turned up at the moment, so the men were taken. I believe there is no doubt they were pardoned by Sir Henry Coldfoot, who was at the Home Office, and was Lord Brentford's great friend. I don't quite believe it all,—it would be too delicious; but a great many do." Madame Goesler, however, was strong in her opinion that the report in reference to Lady Laura was scandalous. She did not believe

a word of it, and was almost angry with the Duchess for her credulity.

It is probable that very many ladies shared the opinion of the Duchess; but not the less on that account did they take part with Phineas Finn. They could not understand why he should be shut out of office because a lady had been in love with him, and by no means seemed to approve the stern virtue of the Prime Minister. It was an interference with things which did not belong to him. And many asserted that Mr. Gresham was much given to such interference. Lady Cantrip, though her husband was Mr. Gresham's most intimate friend, was altogether of this party, as was also the Duchess of St. Bungay, who understood nothing at all about it, but who had once fancied herself to be rudely treated by Mrs. Bonteen. The young Duchess was a woman very strong in getting up a party; and the old Duchess, with many other matrons of high rank, was made to believe that it was incumbent on her to be a Phineas Finnite. One result of this was, that though Phineas was excluded from the liberal Government, all liberal drawing-rooms were open to him, and that he was a lion.

Additional zest was given to all this by the very indiscreet conduct of Mr. Bonteen. He did accept the inferior office of President of the Board of Trade, an office inferior at least to that for which he had been designated, and agreed to fill it without a seat in the Cabinet. But having done so, he could not bring himself to bear his disappointment quietly. He could not work and wait and make himself agreeable to those around him, holding his vexation within his own bosom. He was dark and sullen to his chief, and almost inso-

lent to the Duke of Omnium. Our old friend Plantagenet Palliser was a man who hardly knew insolence when he met it. There was such an absence about him of all self-consciousness, he was so little given to think of his own personal demeanour and outward trappings,—that he never brought himself to question the manners of others to him. Contradiction he would take for simple argument. Strong difference of opinion even on the part of subordinates recommended itself to him. He could put up with apparent rudeness without seeing it, and always gave men credit for good intentions. And with it all he had an assurance in his own position,—a knowledge of the strength derived from his intellect, his industry, his rank, and his wealth, —which made him altogether fearless of others. When the little dog snarls, the big dog does not connect the snarl with himself, simply fancying that the little dog must be uncomfortable. Mr. Bonteen snarled a good deal, and the new Lord Privy Seal thought that the new President of the Board of Trade was not comfortable within himself. But at last the little dog took the big dog by the ear, and then the big dog put out his paw and knocked the little dog over. Mr. Bonteen was told that he had—forgotten himself; and there arose new rumours. It was soon reported that the Lord Privy Seal had refused to work out decimal coinage under the management, in the House of Commons, of the President of the Board of Trade.

Mr. Bonteen, in his troubled spirit, certainly did misbehave himself. Among his closer friends he declared very loudly that he did n't mean to stand it. He had not chosen to throw Mr. Gresham over at once, or to make difficulties at the moment;—but he would not

continue to hold his present position or to support the Government without a seat in the Cabinet. Palliser had become quite useless,—so Mr. Bonteen said,—since his accession to the dukedom, and was quite unfit to deal with decimal coinage. It was a burden to kill any man, and he was not going to kill himself,—at any rate without the reward for which he had been working all his life, and to which he was fully entitled, namely a seat in the Cabinet. Now there were Bonteenites in those days as well as Phineas Finnites. The latter tribe was for the most part feminine; but the former consisted of some half-dozen members of Parliament, who thought they saw their way in encouraging the forlorn hope of the unhappy financier. A leader of a party is nothing without an organ, and an organ came forward to support Mr. Bonteen,—not very creditable to him as a liberal, being a conservative organ,—but not the less gratifying to his spirit, inasmuch as the organ not only supported him, but exerted its very loudest pipes in abusing the man whom of all men he hated the most. The People's Banner was the organ, and Mr. Quintus Slide was, of course, the organist. The following was one of the tunes he played, and was supposed by himself to be a second thunderbolt, and probably a conclusively crushing missile. This thunderbolt fell on Monday, the 3rd of May:—

"Early in last March we found it to be our duty to bring under public notice the conduct of the member for Tankerville in reference to a transaction which took place at a small hotel in Judd Street, and as to which we then ventured to call for the interference of the police. An attempt to murder the member for Tank-

erville had been made by a gentleman now well known in the political world, who,—as it is supposed,—had been driven to madness by wrongs inflicted on him in his dearest and nearest family relations. That the unfortunate gentleman is now insane we believe we may state as a fact. It had become our special duty to refer to this most discreditable transaction, from the fact that a paper, still in our hands, had been confided to us for publication by the wretched husband before his senses had become impaired,—which, however, we were debarred from giving to the public by an injunction served upon us in sudden haste by the Vice-Chancellor. We are far from imputing evil motives, or even indiscretion, to that functionary; but we are of opinion that the moral feeling of the country would have been served by the publication, and we are sure that undue steps were taken by the member for Tankerville to procure that injunction.

"No inquiries whatever were made by the police in reference to that attempt at murder, and we do expect that some member will ask a question on the subject in the House. Would such culpable quiescence have been allowed had not the unfortunate lady, whose name we are unwilling to mention, been the daughter of one of the colleagues of our present Prime Minister, the gentleman who fired the pistol another of them, and the presumed lover, who was fired at, also another? We think that we need hardly ask that question.

"One piece of advice which we ventured to give Mr. Gresham in our former article he has been wise enough to follow. We took upon ourselves to tell him that if, after what has occurred, he ventured to place

the member for Tankerville again in office, the country would not stand it;—and he has abstained. The jaunty footsteps of Mr. Phineas Finn are not heard ascending the stairs of any office at about two in the afternoon, as used to be the case in one of those blessed Downing Street abodes about three years since. That scandal is we think over,—and for ever. The good-looking Irish member of Parliament who had been put in possession of a handsome salary by feminine influences, will not, we think, after what we have already said, again become a burden on the public purse. But we cannot say that we are as yet satisfied in this matter, or that we believe that the public has got to the bottom of it,—as it has a right to do in reference to all matters affecting the public service. We have never yet learned why it is that Mr. Bonteen, after having been nominated Chancellor of the Exchequer, —for the appointment to that office was declared in the House of Commons by the head of his party,— was afterwards excluded from the Cabinet, and placed in an office made peculiarly subordinate by the fact of that exclusion. We have never yet been told why this was done;—but we believe that we are justified in saying that it was managed through the influence of the member for Tankerville; and we are quite sure that the public service of the country has thereby been subjected to grievous injury.

"It is hardly our duty to praise any of that very awkward team of horses which Mr. Gresham drives with an audacity which may atone for his incapacity, if no fearful accident should be the consequence; but if there be one among them whom we could trust for steady work up hill, it is Mr. Bonteen. We were

astounded at Mr. Gresham's indiscretion in announcing the appointment of his new Chancellor of the Exchequer some weeks before he had succeeded in driving Mr. Daubeny from office!—but we are not the less glad to find that the finances of the country were to be entrusted to the hands of the most competent gentleman whom Mr. Gresham has induced to follow his fortunes. But Mr. Phineas Finn, with his female forces, has again interfered, and Mr. Bonteen has been relegated to the Board of Trade, without a seat in the Cabinet. We should not be at all surprised if, as the result of this disgraceful manœuvring, Mr. Bonteen found himself at the head of the liberal party before the session be over. If so, evil would have worked to good. But, be that as it may, we cannot but feel that it is a disgrace to the Government, a disgrace to Parliament, and a disgrace to the country that such results should come from the private scandals of two or three people among us by no means of the best class."

CHAPTER XVII.

THE BROWBOROUGH TRIAL.

THERE was another matter of public interest going on at this time which created a great excitement. And this, too, added to the importance of Phineas Finn, though Phineas was not the hero of the piece. Mr. Browborough, the late member for Tankerville, was tried for bribery. It will be remembered that when Phineas contested the borough in the autumn, this gentleman was returned. He was afterwards unseated, as the result of a petition before the judge, and Phineas was declared to be the true member. The judge who had so decided had reported to the Speaker that further inquiry before a commission into the practices of the late and former elections at Tankerville would be expedient, and such commission had sat in the months of January and February. Half the voters in Tankerville had been examined, and many who were not voters. The commissioners swept very clean, being new brooms, and in their report recommended that Mr. Browborough, whom they had themselves declined to examine, should be prosecuted. That report was made about the end of March, when Mr. Daubeny's great bill was impending. Then there arose a double feeling about Mr. Browborough, who had been regarded by many as a model member of Parliament, a man who never spoke, constant in his attendance, who wanted nothing, who had plenty of money, who gave dinners, to whom a seat in Parliament was the be-all and the end-all of

life. It could not be the wish of any gentleman, who had been accustomed to his slow step in the lobbies, and his burly form always quiescent on one of the upper seats just below the gangway on the conservative side of the House, that such a man should really be punished. When the new laws regarding bribery came to take that shape, the hearts of members revolted from the cruelty,—the hearts even of members on the other side of the House. As long as a seat was in question the battle should of course be fought to the nail. Every kind of accusation might then be lavished without restraint, and every evil practice imputed. It had been known to all the world,—known as a thing that was a matter of course,—that at every election Mr. Browborough had bought his seat. How should a Browborough get a seat without buying it,—a man who could not say ten words, of no family, with no natural following in any constituency, distinguished by no zeal in politics, entertaining no special convictions of his own? How should such a one recommend himself to any borough unless he went there with money in his hand? Of course, he had gone to Tankerville with money in his hand, with plenty of money, and had spent it—like a gentleman. Collectively the House of Commons had determined to put down bribery with a very strong hand. Nobody had spoken against bribery with more fervour than Sir Gregory Grogram, who had himself, as attorney-general, forged the chains for fettering future bribers. He was now again attorney-general, much to his disgust, as Mr. Gresham had at the last moment found it wise to restore Lord Weazeling to the woolsack; and to his hands were to be entrusted the prosecution of Mr. Browborough. But it

was observed by many that the job was not much to his taste. The House had been very hot against bribery, —and certain members of the existing Government, when the late bill had been passed, had expressed themselves with almost burning indignation against the crime. But, through it all, there had been a slight undercurrent of ridicule attaching itself to the question of which only they who were behind the scenes were conscious. The House was bound to let the outside world know that all corrupt practices at elections were held to be abominable by the House; but members of the House, as individuals, knew very well what had taken place at their own elections, and were aware of the cheques which they had drawn. Public houses had been kept open as a matter of course, and nowhere perhaps had more beer been drunk than at Clovelly, the borough for which Sir Gregory Grogram sat. When it came to be a matter of individual prosecution against one whom they had all known, and who, as a member, had been inconspicuous and therefore inoffensive, against a heavy, rich, useful man who had been in nobody's way, many thought that it would amount to persecution. The idea of putting old Browborough into prison for conduct which habit had made second nature to a large proportion of the House was distressing to members of Parliament generally. The recommendation for this prosecution was made to the House when Mr. Daubeny was in the first agonies of his great bill, and he at once resolved to ignore the matter altogether, at any rate for the present. If he was to be driven out of power there could be no reason why his attorney-general should prosecute his own ally and follower,—a poor, faithful creature, who had never in

his life voted against his party, and who had always been willing to accept as his natural leader any one whom his party might select. But there were many who had felt that as Mr. Browborough must certainly now be prosecuted sooner or later,—for there could be no final neglecting of the commissioners' report,—it would be better that he should be dealt with by natural friends than by natural enemies. The newspapers, therefore, had endeavoured to hurry the matter on, and it had been decided that the trial should take place at the Durham Spring Assizes, in the first week of May. Sir Gregory Grogram became attorney-general in the middle of April, and he undertook the task upon compulsion. Mr. Browborough's own friends, and Mr. Browborough himself, declared very loudly that there would be the greatest possible cruelty in postponing the trial. His lawyers thought that his best chance lay in bustling the thing on, and were therefore able to show that the cruelty of delay would be extreme,—nay, that any postponement in such a matter would be unconstitutional, if not illegal. It would, of course, have been just as easy to show that hurry on the part of the prosecutor was cruel, and illegal, and unconstitutional, had it been considered that the best chance of acquittal lay in postponement.

And so the trial was forced forward, and Sir Gregory himself was to appear on behalf of the prosecuting House of Commons. There could be no doubt that the sympathies of the public generally were with Mr. Browborough, though there was as little doubt that he was guilty. When the evidence taken by the commissioners had just appeared in the newspapers,—when first the facts of this and other elections at Tankerville

were made public, and the world was shown how common it had been for Mr. Browborough to buy votes, —how clearly the knowledge of the corruption had been brought home to himself,—there had for a short week or so been a feeling against him. Two or three London papers had printed leading articles, giving in detail the salient points of the old sinner's criminality, and expressing a conviction that now, at least, would the real criminal be punished. But this had died away, and the anger against Mr. Browborough, even on the part of the most virtuous of the public press, had become no more than lukewarm. Some papers boldly defended him, ridiculed the commissioners, and declared that the trial was altogether an absurdity. The People's Banner, setting at defiance with an admirable audacity all the facts as given in the commissioners' report, declared that there was not one tittle of evidence against Mr. Browborough, and hinted that the trial had been got up by the malign influence of that doer of all evil, Phineas Finn. But men who knew better what was going on in the world than did Mr. Quintus Slide, were well aware that such assertions as these were both unavailing and unnecessary. Mr. Browborough was believed to be quite safe; but his safety lay in the indifference of his prosecutors,—certainly not in his innocence. Any one prominent in affairs can always see when a man may steal a horse and when a man may not look over a hedge. Mr. Browborough had stolen his horse, and had repeated the theft over and over again. The evidence of it all was forthcoming, —had, indeed, been already sifted. But Sir Gregory Grogram, who was prominent in affairs, knew that the theft might be condoned.

Nevertheless, the case came on at the Durham Assizes. Within the last two months Browborough had become quite a hero at Tankerville. The Church party had forgotten his broken pledges, and the radicals remembered only his generosity. Could he have stood for the seat again on the day on which the judges entered Durham, he might have been returned without bribery. Throughout the whole county the prosecution was unpopular. During no portion of his parliamentary career had Mr. Browborough's name been treated with so much respect in the grandly ecclesiastical city as now. He dined with the dean on the day before the trial, and on the Sunday was shown by the head verger into the stall next to the chancellor of the diocese, with a reference which seemed to imply that he was almost as graceful as a martyr. When he took his seat in the court next to his attorney, everybody shook hands with him. When Sir Gregory got up to open his case, not one of the listeners then supposed that Mr. Browborough was about to suffer any punishment. He was arraigned before Mr. Baron Boultby, who had himself sat for a borough in his younger days, and who knew well how things were done. We are all aware how impassionately grand are the minds of judges, when men accused of crimes are brought before them for trial; but judges after all are men, and Mr. Baron Boultby, as he looked at Mr. Browborough, could not but have thought of the old days.

It was nevertheless necessary that the prosecution should be conducted in a properly formal manner, and that all the evidence should be given. There was a cloud of witnesses over from Tankerville,—miners,

colliers, and the like,—having a very good turn of it at the expense of the poor borough. All these men must be examined, and their evidence would no doubt be the same now as when it was given with so damnable an effect before those clean-sweeping commissioners. Sir Gregory's opening speech was quite worthy of Sir Gregory. It was essentially necessary, he said, that the atmosphere of our boroughs should be cleansed and purified from the taint of corruption. The voice of the country had spoken very plainly on the subject, and the verdict had gone forth that there should be no more bribery at elections. At the last election at Tankerville, and as he feared, at some former elections, there had been manifest bribery. It would be for the jury to decide whether Mr. Browborough himself had been so connected with the acts of his agents as to be himself within the reach of the law. If it were found that he had brought himself within the reach of the law, the jury would no doubt say so, and in such case would do great service to the cause of purity; but if Mr. Browborough had not been personally cognisant of what his agents had done, then the jury would be bound to acquit him. A man was not necessarily guilty of bribery in the eye of the law because bribery had been committed, even though the bribery so committed had been sufficiently proved to deprive him of the seat which he would otherwise have enjoyed. Nothing could be clearer than the manner in which Sir Gregory explained it all to the jury; nothing more eloquent than his denunciation against bribery in general; nothing more mild than his allegations against Mr. Browborough individually.

In regard to the evidence, Sir Gregory with his two

assistants, went through his work manfully. The evidence was given,—not to the same length as at Tankerville before the commissioners,—but really to the same effect. But yet the record of the evidence as given in the newspapers seemed to be altogether different. At Tankerville there had been an indignant and sometimes an indiscreet zeal which had communicated itself to the whole proceedings. The general flavour of the trial at Durham was one of good-humoured raillery. Mr. Browborough's counsel in cross-examining the witnesses for the prosecution displayed none of that righteous wrath,—wrath righteous on behalf of injured innocences —which is so common with gentlemen employed in the defence of criminals; but bowed and simpered, and nodded at Sir Gregory in a manner that was quite pleasant to behold. Nobody scolded anybody. There was no roaring of barristers, no clenching of fists and kicking up of dust, no threats, no allusions to witnesses' oaths. A considerable amount of gentle fun was poked at the witnesses by the defending counsel, but not in a manner to give any pain. Gentlemen who acknowledged to have received seventeen shillings and sixpence for their votes at the last election were asked how they had invested their money. Allusions were made to their wives, and a large amount of good-humoured sparring was allowed, in which the witnesses thought that they had the best of it. The men of Tankerville long remembered this trial, and hoped anxiously that there might soon be another. The only man treated with severity was poor Phineas Finn, and luckily for himself he was not present. His qualifications as member of Parliament for Tankerville were somewhat roughly treated. Each witness there, when he was

asked what candidate would probably be returned for Tankerville at the next election, readily answered that Mr. Browborough would certainly carry the seat. Mr. Browborough sat in the court throughout it all, and was the hero of the day.

The judge's summing up was very short, and seemed to have been given almost with indolence. The one point on which he insisted was the difference between such evidence of bribery as would deprive a man of his seat, and that which would make him subject to the criminal law. By the criminal law a man could not be punished for the acts of another. Punishment must follow a man's own act. If a man were to instigate another to murder he would be punished, not for the murder, but for the instigation. They were now administering the criminal law, and they were bound to give their verdict for an acquittal unless they were convinced that the man on his trial had himself,—wilfully and wittingly,—been guilty of the crime imputed. He went through the evidence, which was in itself clear against the old sinner, and which had been in no instance validly contradicted, and then left the matter to the jury. The men in the box put their heads together, and returned a verdict of acquittal without one moment's delay. Sir Gregory Grogram and his assistants collected their papers together. The judge addressed three or four words almost of compliment to Mr. Browborough, and the affair was over, to the manifest contentment of every one there present. Sir Gregory Grogram was by no means disappointed, and everybody on his own side in Parliament and on the other, thought that he had done his duty very well. The clean-sweeping commissioners who had been ani-

mated with wonderful zeal by the nature and novelty of their work, probably felt that they had been betrayed, but it may be doubted whether any one else was disconcerted by the result of the trial, unless it might be some poor innocents here and there about the country who had been induced to believe that bribery and corruption were in truth to be banished from the purlieus of Westminster.

Mr. Roby and Mr. Rattler, who filled the same office each for his own party, in and out, were both acquainted with each other, and apt to discuss parliamentary questions in the library and smoking-room of the House, where such discussions could be held on most matters. "I was very glad that the case went as it did at Durham," said Mr. Rattler.

"And so am I," said Mr. Roby. "Browborough was always a good fellow."

"Not a doubt about it; and no good could have come from a conviction. I suppose there had been a little money spent in Tankerville."

"And at other places one could mention," said Mr. Roby.

"Of course there has;—and money will be spent again. Nobody dislikes bribery more than I do. The House, of course, dislikes it. But if a man loses his seat, surely that is punishment enough."

"It 's better to have to draw a cheque sometimes than to be out in the cold."

"Nevertheless, members would prefer that their seats should not cost them so much," continued Mr. Rattler. "But the thing can't be done all at once. That idea of pouncing upon one man and making a victim of him is very disagreeable to me. I should

have been sorry to have seen a verdict against Browborough. You must acknowledge that there was no bitterness in the way in which Grogram did it."

"We all feel that," said Mr. Roby,—who was, perhaps, by nature a little more candid than his rival,—"and when the time comes no doubt we shall return the compliment."

The matter was discussed in quite a different spirit between two other politicians. "So Sir Gregory has failed at Durham," said Lord Cantrip to his friend, Mr. Gresham.

"I was sure he would."

"And why?"

"Ah;—why? How am I to answer such a question? Did you think that Mr. Browborough would be convicted of bribery by a jury."

"No, indeed," answered Lord Cantrip.

"And can you tell me why?"

"Because there was no earnestness in the matter,—either with the attorney-general or with any one else."

"And yet," said Mr. Gresham, "Grogram is a very earnest man when he believes in his case. No member of Parliament will ever be punished for bribery as for a crime till members of Parliament generally look upon bribery as a crime. We are very far from that as yet. I should have thought a conviction to be a great misfortune."

"Why so?"

"Because it would have created ill blood, and our own hands in this matter are not a bit cleaner than those of our adversaries. We can't afford to pull their houses to pieces before we have put our own in order. The

thing will be done; but it must, I fear, be done slowly, —as is the case with all reforms from within."

Phineas Finn, who was very sore and unhappy at this time, and who consequently was much in love with purity and anxious for severity, felt himself personally aggrieved by the acquittal. It was almost tantamount to a verdict against himself. And then he knew so well that bribery had been committed, and was so confident that such a one as Mr. Browborough could have been returned to Parliament by none other than corrupt means! In his present mood he would have been almost glad to see Mr. Browborough at the treadmill, and would have thought six months' solitary confinement quite inadequate to the offence. "I never read anything in my life that disgusted me so much," he said to his friend, Mr. Monk.

"I can't go along with you there."

"If any man ever was guilty of bribery, he was guilty!"

"I don't doubt it for a moment."

"And yet Grogram did not try to get a verdict."

"Had he tried ever so much he would have failed. In a matter such as that,—political and not social in its nature,—a jury is sure to be guided by what it has, perhaps unconsciously, learned to be the feeling of the country. No disgrace is attached to their verdict, and yet everybody knows that Mr. Browborough had bribed, and all those who have looked into it know, too, that the evidence was conclusive."

"Then are the jury all perjured," said Phineas.

"I have nothing to say to that. No stain of perjury clings to them. They are better received in Durham

to-day than they would have been had they found Mr. Browborough guilty. In business, as in private life, they will be held to be as trustworthy as before;—and they will be, for aught that we know, quite trustworthy. There are still circumstances in which a man, though on his oath, may be untrue with no more stain of falsehood than falls upon him when he denies himself at his front door though he happen to be at home."

"What must we think of such a condition of things, Mr. Monk?"

"That it 's capable of improvement. I do not know that we can think anything else. As for Sir Gregory Grogram and Baron Boultby and the jury, it would be waste of powder to execrate them. In political matters it is very hard for a man in office to be purer than his neighbours,—and, when he is so, he becomes troublesome. I have found that out before to-day."

With Lady Laura Kennedy Phineas did find some sympathy;—but then she would have sympathised with him on any subject under the sun. If he would only come to her and sit with her she would fool him to the top of his bent. He had resolved that he would go to Portman Square as little as possible, and had been confirmed in that resolution by the scandal which had now spread everywhere about the town in reference to himself and herself. But still he went. He never left her till some promise of returning at some stated time had been extracted from him. He had even told her of his own scruples and of her danger,—and they had discussed together that last thunderbolt which had fallen from the Jove of the People's Banner. But she had laughed his caution to scorn. Did she not know herself and her own innocence? Was she not living

in her father's house, and with her father? Should she quail beneath the stings and venom of such a reptile as Quintus Slide? "Oh, Phineas," she said, "let us be braver than that." He would much prefer to have stayed away,—but still he went to her. He was conscious of her dangerous love for him. He knew well that it was not returned. He was aware that it would be best for both that he should be apart. But yet he could not bring himself to wound her by his absence. "I do not see why you should feel it so much," she said, speaking of the trial at Durham.

"We were both on our trial,—he and I."

"Everybody knows that he bribed and that you did not."

"Yes;—and everybody despises me and pats him on the back. I am sick of the whole thing. There is no honesty in the life we lead."

"You got your seat at any rate."

"I wish with all my heart that I had never seen the dirty wretched place," said he.

"Oh, Phineas, do not say that."

"But I do say it. Of what use is the seat to me? If I could only feel that any one knew——"

"Knew what, Phineas?"

"It does n't matter."

"I understand. I know that you have meant to be honest, while this man has always meant to be dishonest. I know that you have intended to serve your country, and have wished to work for it. But you cannot expect that it should all be roses."

"Roses! The nosegays which are worn down at Westminster are made of garlic and dandelions!"

CHAPTER XVIII.

SOME PASSAGES IN THE LIFE OF EMILIUS.

THE writer of this chronicle is not allowed to imagine that any of his readers have read the wonderful and vexatious adventures of Lady Eustace, a lady of good birth, of high rank, and of large fortune, who, but a year or two since, became almost a martyr to a diamond necklace which was stolen from her. With her history the present reader has but small concern, but it may be necessary that he should know that the lady in question, who had been a widow with many suitors, at last gave her hand and her fortune to a clergyman whose name was Joseph Emilius. Mr. Emilius, though not an Englishman by birth,—and, as was supposed, a Bohemian Jew in the earlier days of his career,—had obtained some reputation as a preacher in London, and had moved,—if not in fashionable circles,—at any rate in circles so near to fashion as to be brought within the reach of Lady Eustace's charms. They were married, and for some few months Mr. Emilius enjoyed a halcyon existence, the delights of which were, perhaps, not materially marred by the necessity which he felt of subjecting his young wife to marital authority. "My dear," he would say, "you will know me better soon, and then things will be smooth." In the meantime he drew more largely upon her money than was pleasing to her and to her friends, and appeared to have requirements for cash which were both secret and

unlimited. At the end of twelve months Lady Eustace had run away from him, and Mr. Emilius had made overtures, by accepting which his wife would be enabled to purchase his absence at the cost of half her income. The arrangement was not regarded as being in every respect satisfactory, but Lady Eustace declared passionately that any possible sacrifice would be preferable to the company of Mr. Emilius. There had, however, been a rumour before her marriage that there was still living in his old country a Mrs. Emilius when he married Lady Eustace; and, though it had been supposed by those who were most nearly concerned with Lady Eustace that this report had been unfounded and malicious, nevertheless, when the man's claims became so exorbitant, reference was again made to the charge of bigamy. If it could be proved that Mr. Emilius had a wife living in Bohemia, a cheaper mode of escape would be found for the persecuted lady than that which he himself had suggested.

It had happened that since her marriage with Mr. Emilius, Lady Eustace had become intimate with our Mr. Bonteen and his wife. She had been at one time engaged to marry Lord Fawn, one of Mr. Bonteen's colleagues, and during the various circumstances which had led to the disruption of that engagement, this friendship had been formed. It must be understood that Lady Eustace had a most desirable residence of her own in the country,—Portray Castle in Scotland, —and that it was thought expedient by many to cultivate her acquaintance. She was rich, beautiful, and clever; and, though her marriage with Mr. Emilius had never been looked upon as a success, still, in the estimation of some people, it added an interest to her career.

The Bonteens had taken her up, and now both Mr. and Mrs. Bonteen were hot in pursuit of evidence which might prove Mr. Emilius to be a bigamist.

When the disruption of conjugal relations was commenced, Lady Eustace succeeded in obtaining refuge at Portray Castle without the presence of her husband. She fled from London during a visit he made to Brighton with the object of preaching to a congregation by which his eloquence was held in great esteem. He left London in one direction by the 5 P.M. express train on Saturday, and she in the other by the limited mail at 8.45. A telegram, informing him of what had taken place, reached him the next morning at Brighton while he was at breakfast. He preached his sermon, charming the congregation by the graces of his extempore eloquence,—moving every woman there to tears, —and then was after his wife before the ladies had taken their first glass of sherry at luncheon. But her ladyship had twenty-four hours' start of him,—although he did his best; and when he reached Portray Castle the door was shut in his face. He endeavoured to obtain the aid of blacksmiths to open, as he said, his own hall door,—to obtain the aid of constables to compel the blacksmiths, of magistrates to compel the constables,—and even of a judge to compel the magistrates; but he was met on every side by a statement that the lady of the castle declared that she was not his wife, and that therefore he had no right whatever to demand that the door should be opened. Some other woman, —so he was informed that the lady said,—out in a strange country was really his wife. It was her intention to prove him to be a bigamist, and to have him locked up. In the meantime she chose to lock herself

up in her own mansion. Such was the nature of the message that was delivered to him through the bars of the lady's castle.

How poor Lady Eustace was protected, and, at the same time, made miserable by the energy and unrestrained language of one of her own servants, Andrew Gowran by name, it hardly concerns us now to inquire. Mr. Emilius did not succeed in effecting an entrance; but he remained for some time in the neighbourhood, and had notices served on the tenants in regard to the rents, which puzzled the poor folk round Portray Castle very much. After a while Lady Eustace, finding that her peace and comfort imperatively demanded that she should prove the allegations which she had made, fled again from Portray Castle to London, and threw herself into the hands of the Bonteens. This took place just as Mr. Bonteen's hopes in regard to the Chancellorship of the Exchequer were beginning to soar high, and when his hands were very full of business. But with that energy for which he was so conspicuous, Mr. Bonteen had made a visit to Bohemia during his short Christmas holidays, and had there set people to work. When at Prague he had, he thought, very nearly unravelled the secret himself. He had found the woman whom he believed to be Mrs. Emilius, and who was now living somewhat merrily in Prague under another name. She acknowledged that in old days, when they were both young, she had been acquainted with a certain Yosef Mealyus, at a time in which he had been in the employment of a Jewish money-lender in the city; but,—as she declared,—she had never been married to him. Mr. Bonteen learned also that the gentleman now known as Mr. Joseph

Emilius of the London Chapel had been known in his own country as Yosef Mealyus, the name which had been borne by the very respectable Jew who was his father. Then Mr. Bonteen had returned home, and, as we all know, had become engaged in matters of deeper import than even the deliverance of Lady Eustace from her thraldom.

Mr. Emilius made no attempt to obtain the person of his wife while she was under Mr. Bonteen's custody, but he did renew his offer to compromise. If the estate could not afford to give him the two thousand a year which he had first demanded, he would take fifteen hundred. He explained all this personally to Mr. Bonteen, who condescended to see him. He was very eager to make Mr. Bonteen understand how bad even then would be his condition. Mr. Bonteen was, of course, aware that he would have to pay very heavily for insuring his wife's life. He was piteous, argumentative, and at first gentle; but when Mr. Bonteen somewhat rashly told him that the evidence of a former marriage and of the present existence of the former wife would certainly be forthcoming, he defied Mr. Bonteen and his evidence,—and swore that if his claims were not satisfied, he would make use of the power which the English law gave him for the recovery of his wife's person. And as to her property,—it was his, not hers. From this time forward if she wanted to separate herself from him she must ask him for an allowance. Now, it certainly was the case that Lady Eustace had married the man without any sufficient precaution as to keeping her money in her own hands, and Mr. Emilius had insisted that the rents of the property which was hers for her life should be paid to him,

and on his receipt only. The poor tenants had been noticed this way and noticed that till they had begun to doubt whether their safest course would not be to keep their rents in their own hands. But lately the lawyers of the Eustace family,—who were not, indeed, very fond of Lady Eustace personally,—came forward for the sake of the property, and guaranteed the tenants against all proceedings until the question of the legality of the marriage should be settled. So Mr. Emilius,—or the Reverend Mealyus, as everybody now called him, —went to law; and Lady Eustace went to law; and the Eustace family went to law;—but still, as yet, no evidence was forthcoming sufficient to enable Mr. Bonteen, as the lady's friend, to put the gentleman into prison.

It was said for a while that Mealyus had absconded. After this interview with Mr. Bonteen he certainly did leave England, and made a journey to Prague. It was thought that he would not return, and that Lady Eustace would be obliged to carry on the trial, which was to liberate her and her property, in his absence. She was told that the very fact of his absence would go far with a jury, and she was glad to be freed from his presence in England. But he did return, declaring aloud that he would have his rights. His wife should be made to put herself into his hands, and he would obtain possession of the income which was his own. People then began to doubt. It was known that a very clever lawyer's clerk had been sent to Prague to complete the work there which Mr. Bonteen had commenced. But the clerk did not come back as soon as was expected, and news arrived that he had been taken ill. There was a rumour that he had been poisoned

at his hotel; but, as the man was not said to be dead, people hardly believed the rumour. It became necessary, however, to send another lawyer's clerk, and the matter was gradually progressing to a very interesting complication.

Mr. Bonteen, to tell the truth, was becoming sick of it. When Emilius or Mealyus, was supposed to have absconded, Lady Eustace left Mr. Bonteen's house, and located herself at one of the large London hotels; but when the man came back, bolder than ever, she again betook herself to the shelter of Mr. Bonteen's roof. She expressed the most lavish affection for Mrs. Bonteen, and professed to regard Mr. Bonteen as almost a political god, declaring her conviction that he, and he alone, as Prime Minister, could save the country, and became very loud in her wrath when he was robbed of his seat in the Cabinet. Lizzie Eustace, as her ladyship had always been called, was a clever, pretty, coaxing little woman, who knew how to make the most of her advantages. She had not been very wise in her life, having lost the friends who would have been truest to her, and confided in persons who had greatly injured her. She was neither true of heart or tongue, nor affectionate, nor even honest. But she was engaging; she could flatter; and could assume a reverential admiration which was very foreign to her real character. In these days she almost worshipped Mr. Bonteen, and could never be happy except in the presence of her dearest darling friend, Mrs. Bonteen. Mr. Bonteen was tired of her, and Mrs. Bonteen was becoming almost sick of the constant kisses with which she was greeted; but Lizzie Eustace had got hold of them and they could not turn her off.

"You saw the People's Banner, Mrs. Bonteen, on Monday?" Lady Eustace had been reading the paper in her friend's drawing-room. "They seem to think that Mr. Bonteen must be Prime Minister before long."

"I don't think he expects that, my dear."

"Why not? Everybody says the People's Banner is the cleverest paper we have now. I always hated the very name of that Phineas Finn."

"Did you know him?"

"Not exactly, he was gone before my time; but poor Lord Fawn used to talk of him. He was one of those conceited Irish upstarts that are never good for anything."

"Very handsome, you know," said Mrs. Bonteen.

"Was he? I have heard it said that a good many ladies admired him."

"It was quite absurd; with Lady Laura Kennedy it was worse than absurd. And there was Lady Glencora, and Violet Effingham, who married Lady Laura's brother, and that Madame Goesler, whom I hate,—and ever so many others."

"And is it true that it was he who got Mr. Bonteen so shamefully used?"

"It was his faction."

"I do so hate that kind of thing," said Lady Eustace, with righteous indignation; "I used to hear a great deal about Government and all that when the affair was on between me and poor Lord Fawn, and that kind of dishonesty always disgusted me. I don't know that I think so much of Mr. Gresham after all."

"He is a very weak man."

"His conduct to Mr. Bonteen has been outrageous; and if he has done it just because that Duchess of

Omnium has told him, I really do think that he is not fit to rule the nation. As for Mr. Phineas Finn, it is dreadful to think that a creature like that should be able to interfere with such a man as Mr. Bonteen."

This was on Wednesday afternoon,—the day on which members of Parliament dine out,—and at that moment Mr. Bonteen entered the drawing-room, having left the House for his half holiday at six o'clock. Lady Eustace got up and gave him her hand, and smiled upon him as though he were indeed her god. "You look so tired and so worried, Mr. Bonteen."

"Worried;—I should think so."

"Is there anything fresh?" asked his wife.

"That fellow Finn is spreading all manner of lies about me."

"What lies, Mr. Bonteen?" asked Lady Eustace. "Not new lies, I hope."

"It all comes from Carlton Terrace." The reader may perhaps remember that the young Duchess of Omnium lived in Carlton Terrace. "I can trace it all there. I won't stand it if it goes on like this. A clique of stupid women to take up the cudgels for a coal-heaving sort of fellow like that, and sting one like a lot of hornets! Would you believe it?—the Duke almost refused to speak to me just now—a man for whom I have been working like a slave for the last twelve months!"

"I would not stand it," said Lady Eustace.

"By-the-bye, Lady Eustace, we have had news from Prague."

"What news," said she, clasping her hands.

"That fellow Pratt we sent out is dead."

"No!"

"Not a doubt but what he was poisoned; but they

seem to think that nothing can be proved. Coulson is on his way out, and I should n't wonder if they served him the same."

"And it might have been you!" said Lady Eustace, taking hold of her friend's arm with almost frantic affection.

Yes, indeed. It might have been the lot of Mr. Bonteen to have died at Prague—to have been poisoned by the machinations of the former Mrs. Mealyus, if such really had been the fortune of the unfortunate Mr. Pratt. For he had been quite as busy at Prague as his successor in the work. He had found out much, though not everything. It certainly had been believed that Yosef Mealyus was a married man, but he had brought the woman with him to Prague, and had certainly not married her in the city. She was believed to have come from Cracow, and Mr. Bonteen's zeal on behalf of his friend had not been sufficient to carry him so far east. But he had learned from various sources that the man and woman had been supposed to be married,—that she had borne the man's name, and that he had taken upon himself authority as her husband. There had been written communications with Cracow, and information was received that a man of the name of Yosef Mealyus had been married to a Jewess in that town. But this had been twenty years ago, and Mr. Emilius professed himself to be only thirty-five years old, and had in his possession a document from his synagogue professing to give a record of his birth, proving such to be his age. It was also ascertained that Mealyus was a name common in Cracow, and that there were very many of the family in Galicia. Altogether the case was full of difficulty, but it was

thought that Mr. Bonteen's evidence would be sufficient to save the property from the hands of the cormorant, at any rate till such time as better evidence of the first marriage could be obtained. It had been hoped that when the man went away he would not return; but he had returned, and it was now resolved that no terms should be kept with him and no payment offered to him. The house at Portray was kept barred, and the servants were ordered not to admit him. No money was to be paid to him, and he was to be left to take any proceedings at law which he might please,—while his adversaries were proceeding against him with all the weapons at their disposal. In the meantime, his chapel was of course deserted, and the unfortunate man was left penniless in the world.

Various opinions prevailed as to Mr. Bonteen's conduct in the matter. Some people remembered that during the last autumn he and his wife had stayed three months at Portray Castle, and declared that the friendship between them and Lady Eustace had been very useful. Of these malicious people it seemed to be, moreover, the opinion that the connection might become even more useful if Mr. Emilius could be discharged.

It was true that Mrs. Bonteen had borrowed a little money from Lady Eustace, but of this her husband knew nothing till the Jew in his wrath made the thing public. After all, it had only been a poor £25, and the money had been repaid before Mr. Bonteen took his journey to Prague. Mr. Bonteen was, however, unable to deny that the cost of that journey was defrayed by Lady Eustace, and it was thought mean in a man aspiring to be Chancellor of the Exchequer to have

his travelling expenses paid for him by a lady. Many, however, were of opinion that Mr. Bonteen had been almost romantic in his friendship, and that the bright eyes of Lady Eustace had produced upon this dragon of business the wonderful effect that was noticed. Be that as it may, now, in the terrible distress of his mind at the political aspect of the times, he had become almost sick of Lady Eustace, and would gladly have sent her away from his house had he known how to do so without incurring censure.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE QUARREL.

On that Wednesday evening Phineas Finn was at the Universe. He dined at the house of Madame Goesler, and went from thence to the club in better spirits than he had known for some weeks past. The Duke and Duchess had been at Madame Goesler's and Lord and Lady Chiltern, who were now up in town, with Barrington Erle, and,—as it had happened,—old Mr. Maule. The dinner had been very pleasant, and two or three words had been spoken which had tended to raise the heart of our hero. In the first place Barrington Erle had expressed a regret that Phineas was not at his old post at the Colonies, and the young Duke had re-echoed it. Phineas thought that the manner of his old friend Erle was more cordial to him than it had been lately, and even that comforted him. Then it was a delight to him to meet the Chilterns, who were always gracious to him. But perhaps his greatest pleasure came from the reception which was accorded by his hostess to Mr. Maule, which was of a nature not easy to describe. It had become evident to Phineas that Mr. Maule was constant in his attentions to Madame Goesler;—and though he had no purpose of his own in reference to the lady,—though he was aware that former circumstances, circumstances of that previous life to which he was accustomed to look back as to another existence, made it impossible that

he should have any such purpose,—still he viewed Mr. Maule with dislike. He had once ventured to ask her whether she really liked "that old padded dandy." She had answered that she did like the old dandy. Old dandies, she thought, were preferable to old men who did not care how they looked;—and as for the padding, that was his affair, not hers. She did not know why a man should not have a pad in his coat, as well as a woman one at the back of her head. But Phineas had known that this was her gentle raillery, and now he was delighted to find that she continued it, after a still more gentle fashion, before the man's face. Mr. Maule's manner was certainly peculiar. He was more than ordinarily polite,—and was afterwards declared by the Duchess to have made love like an old gander. But Madame Goesler, who knew exactly how to receive such attentions, turned a glance now and then upon Phineas Finn, which he could now read with absolute precision. "You see how I can dispose of a padded old dandy directly he goes an inch too far." No words could have said that to him more plainly than did these one or two glances;—and, as he had learned to dislike Mr. Maule, he was gratified.

Of course they all talked about Lady Eustace and Mr. Emilius. "Do you remember how intensely interested the dear old Duke used to be when we none of us knew what had become of the diamonds?" said the Duchess.

"And how you took her part," said Madame Goesler.

"So did you,—just as much as I; and why not? She was a most interesting young woman, and I sincerely hope we have not got to the end of her yet. The worst of it is that she has got into such—very bad

hands. The Bonteens have taken her up altogether. Do you know her, Mr. Finn?"

"No, Duchess;—and am hardly likely to make her acquaintance while she remains where she is now." The Duchess laughed and nodded her head. All the world knew by this time that he had declared himself to be the sworn enemy of the Bonteens.

And there had been some conversation on that terribly difficult question respecting the foxes in Trumpeton Wood. "The fact is, Lord Chiltern," said the Duke, "I 'm as ignorant as a child. I would do right if I knew how. What ought I to do. Shall I import some foxes?"

"I don't suppose, Duke, that in all England there is a spot in which foxes are more prone to breed."

"Indeed. I 'm very glad of that. But something goes wrong afterwards, I fear."

"The nurseries are not well managed, perhaps," said the Duchess.

"Gipsy kidnappers are allowed about the place," said Madame Goesler.

"Gipsies!" exclaimed the Duke.

"Poachers!" said Lord Chiltern. "But it is n't that we mind. We could deal with that ourselves if the woods were properly managed. A head of game and foxes can be reared together very well, if——"

"I don't care a straw for a head of game, Lord Chiltern. As far as my own tastes go, I would wish that there was neither a pheasant nor a partridge nor a hare on any property that I own. I think that sheep and barn-door fowls do better for everybody in the long run, and that men who cannot live without shooting should go beyond thickly populated regions to find

it. And, indeed, for myself, I must say the same about foxes. They do not interest me and I fancy that they will gradually be exterminated."

"God forbid!" exclaimed Lord Chiltern.

"But I do not find myself called upon to exterminate them myself," continued the Duke. "The number of men who amuse themselves by riding after one fox is too great for me to wish to interfere with them. And I know that my neighbours in the country conceive it to be my duty to have foxes for them. I will oblige them, Lord Chiltern, as far as I can without detriment to other duties."

"You leave it to me," said the Duchess to her neighbour, Lord Chiltern. "I 'll speak to Mr. Fothergill myself, and have it put right." It unfortunately happened, however, that Lord Chiltern got a letter the very next morning from old Doggett telling him that a litter of young cubs had been destroyed that week in Trumpeton Wood.

Barrington Erle and Phineas went off to the Universe together, and as they went the old terms of intimacy seemed to be re-established between them. "Nobody can be so sorry as I am," said Barrington, "at the manner in which things have gone. When I wrote to you, of course, I thought it certain that, if we came in, you would come with us."

"Do not let that fret you."

"But it does fret me,—very much. There are so many slips that of course no one can answer for anything."

"Of course not. I know who has been my friend."

"The joke of it is, that he himself is at present so utterly friendless. The Duke will hardly speak to him.

I know that as a fact. And Gresham has begun to find something is wrong. We all hoped that he would refuse to come in without a seat in the Cabinet;—but that was too good to be true. They say he talks of resigning. I shall believe it when I see it. He 'd better not play any tricks, for if he did resign, it would be accepted at once." Phineas, when he heard this, could not help thinking how glorious it would be if Mr. Bonteen were to resign, and if the place so vacated, or some vacancy so occasioned, were to be filled by him!

They reached the club together, and as they went up the stairs, they heard the hum of many voices in the room. "All the world and his wife are here to-night," said Phineas. They overtook a couple of men at the door, so that there was something of the bustle of a crowd as they entered. There was a difficulty in finding places in which to put their coats and hats,—for the accommodation of the Universe is not great. There was a knot of men talking not far from them, and among the voices Phineas could clearly hear that of Mr. Bonteen. Rattler's he had heard before, and also Fitzgibbon's, though he had not distinguished any words from them. But those spoken by Mr. Bonteen he did distinguish very plainly. "Mr. Phineas Finn, or some such fellow as that, would be after her at once," said Mr. Bonteen. Then Phineas walked immediately among the knot of men and showed himself. As soon as he heard his name mentioned, he doubted for a moment what he would do. Mr. Bonteen when speaking had not known of his presence, and it might be his duty not to seem to have listened. But the speech had been made aloud, in the open room,—so that those who chose might listen;—and Phineas could not

but have heard it.' In that moment he resolved that he was bound to take notice of what he had heard. "What is it, Mr. Bonteen, that Phineas Finn will do?" he asked.

Mr. Bonteen had been—dining. He was not a man by any means habitually intemperate, and now any one saying that he was tipsy would have maligned him. But he was flushed with much wine, and he was a man whose arrogance in that condition was apt to become extreme. "In vino veritas!" The sober devil can hide his cloven hoof; but when the devil drinks he loses his cunning and grows honest. Mr. Bonteen looked Phineas full in the face a second or two before he answered, and then said,—quite aloud—"You have crept upon us unawares, sir."

"What do you mean by that, sir?" said Phineas. "I have come in as any other man comes."

"Listeners at any rate never hear any good of themselves."

Then there were present among those assembled clear indications of disapproval of Bonteen's conduct. In these days,—when no palpable and immediate punishment is at hand for personal insolence from man to man,—personal insolence to one man in a company seems almost to constitute an insult to every one present. When men could fight readily, an arrogant word or two between two known to be hostile to each other was only an invitation to a duel, and the angry man was doing that for which it was known that he could be made to pay. There was, or it was often thought that there was, a real spirit in the angry man's conduct, and they who were his friends before became perhaps more his friends when he had thus shown that he had

an enemy. But a different feeling prevails at present; —a feeling so different, that we may almost say that a man in general society cannot speak even roughly to any but his intimate comrades without giving offence to all around him. Men have learned to hate the nuisance of a row, and to feel that their comfort is endangered if a man prone to rows gets among them. Of all candidates at a club a known quarreller is more sure of blackballs now than even in the times when such a one provoked duels. Of all bores he is the worst; and there is always an unexpressed feeling that such a one exacts more from his company than his share of attention. This is so strong, that too often the man quarrelled with, though he be as innocent as was Phineas on the present occasion, is made subject to the general aversion which is felt for men who misbehave themselves.

"I wish to hear no good of myself from you," said Phineas, following him to his seat. "Who is it that you said,—I should be after?" The room was full, and every one there, even they who had come in with Phineas, knew that Lady Eustace was the woman. Everybody at present was talking about Lady Eustace.

"Never mind," said Barrington Erle, taking him by the arm. "What 's the use of a row?"

"No use at all;—but if you heard your name mentioned in such a manner you would find it impossible to pass it over. There is Mr. Monk;—ask him."

Mr. Monk was sitting very quietly in a corner of the room with another gentleman of his own age by him,—one devoted to literary pursuits, and a constant attendant at the Universe. As he said afterwards, he had never known any unpleasantness of that sort in

the club before. There were many men of note in the room. There was a foreign minister, a member of the Cabinet, two ex-members of the Cabinet, a poet, an exceedingly able editor, two earls, two great members of the Royal Academy, the president of a learned society, a celebrated professor,—and it was expected that royalty might come in at any minute, speak a few benign words, and blow a few clouds of smoke. It was abominable that the harmony of such a meeting should be interrupted by the vinous insolence of Mr. Bonteen, and the useless wrath of Phineas Finn. "Really, Mr. Finn, if I were you I would let it drop," said the gentleman devoted to literary pursuits.

Phineas did not much affect the literary gentleman, but in such a matter would prefer the advice of Mr. Monk to that of any man living. He again appealed to his friend. "You heard what was said?"

"I heard Mr. Bonteen remark that you or somebody like you would in certain circumstances be after a certain lady. I thought it to be an ill-judged speech, and as your particular friend I heard it with great regret."

"What a row about nothing!" said Mr. Bonteen, rising from his seat. "We were speaking of a very pretty woman, and I was saying that some young fellow generally supposed to be fond of pretty women would soon be after her. If that offended your morals, you must have become very strict of late."

There was something in the explanation which, though very bad and vulgar, it was almost impossible not to accept. Such at least was the feeling of those who stood around Phineas Finn. He himself knew

that Mr. Bonteen had intended to assert that he would be after the woman's money and not her beauty; but he had taste enough to perceive that he could not descend to any such detail as that. "There are reasons, Mr. Bonteen," he said, "why I think you should abstain from mentioning my name in public. Your playful references should be made to your friends, and not to those who, to say the least of it, are not your friends."

When the matter was discussed afterwards it was thought that Phineas Finn should have abstained from making the last speech. It was certainly evidence of great anger on his part. And he was very angry. He knew that he had been insulted,—and insulted by the man whom of all men he would feel most disposed to punish for any offence. He could not allow Mr. Bonteen to have the last word, especially as a certain amount of success had seemed to attend them. Fate at the moment was so far propitious to Phineas that outward circumstances saved him from any immediate reply, and thus left him in some degree triumphant. Expected royalty arrived, and cast its salutary oil upon the troubled waters. The Prince, with some well-known popular attendant, entered the room, and for a moment every gentleman rose from his chair. It was but for a moment, and then the Prince became as any other gentleman, talking to his friends. One or two there present, who had perhaps peculiarly royal instincts, had crept up towards him so as to make him the centre of a little knot, but, otherwise, conversation went on much as it had done before the unfortunate arrival of Phineas. That quarrel, however, had been very distinctly trodden under foot by the Prince, for Mr. Bonteen had found himself quite incapacitated from throw-

ing back any missile in reply to the last that had been hurled at him.

Phineas took a vacant seat next to Mr. Monk,—who was deficient perhaps in royal instincts,—and asked him in a whisper his opinion of what had taken place. "Do not think any more of it," said Mr. Monk.

"That is so much more easily said than done. How am I not to think of it?"

"Of course I mean that you are to act as though you had forgotten it."

"Did you ever hear a more gratuitous insult? Of course he was talking of that Lady Eustace."

"I had not been listening to him before, but no doubt he was. I need not tell you now what I think of Mr. Bonteen. He is not more gracious in my eyes than he is in yours. To-night I fancy he has been drinking, which has not improved him. You may be sure of this, Phineas,—that the less of resentful anger you show in such a wretched affair as took place just now, the more will be the blame attached to him and the less to you."

"Why should any blame be attached to me?"

"I don't say that any will unless you allow yourself to become loud and resentful. The thing is not worth your anger."

"I am angry."

"Then go to bed at once, and sleep it off. Come with me, and we 'll walk home together."

"It is n't the proper thing, I fancy, to leave the room while the Prince is here."

"Then I must do the improper thing," said Mr. Monk. "I have n't a key, and I must n't keep my servant up any longer. A quiet man like me can creep

out without notice. Good night, Phineas, and take my advice about this. If you can't forget it, act and speak and look as though you had forgotten it." Then Mr. Monk, without much creeping, left the room.

The club was very full, and there was a clatter of voices, and the clatter round the Prince was the noisiest and merriest. Mr. Bonteen was there, of course, and Phineas as he sat alone could hear him as he edged his words in upon the royal ears. Every now and again there was a royal joke, and then Mr. Bonteen's laughter was conspicuous. As far as Phineas could distinguish the sounds, no special amount of the royal attention was devoted to Mr. Bonteen. That very able editor, and one of the Academicians, and the poet, seemed to be the most honoured, and when the Prince went,—which he did when his cigar was finished, —Phineas observed with inward satisfaction that the royal hand, which was given to the poet, to the editor, and to the painter, was not extended to the President of the Board of Trade. And then, having taken delight in this he accused himself of meanness in having even observed a matter so trivial. Soon after this a ruck of men left the club, and then Phineas rose to go. As he went down the stairs, Barrington Erle followed him with Laurence Fitzgibbon, and the three stood for a moment at the door in the street talking to each other. Finn's way lay eastward from the club, whereas both Erle and Fitzgibbon would go westward towards their homes. "How well the Prince behaves at these sort of places!" said Erle.

"Princes ought to behave well," said Phineas.

"Somebody else did n't behave very well,—eh, Finn, my boy?" said Laurence.

"Somebody else, as you call him," replied Phineas, "is very unlike a prince, and never does behave well. To-night, however, he surpassed himself."

"Don't bother your mind about it, old fellow," said Barrington.

"I tell you what it is, Erle," said Phineas. "I don't think that I 'm a vindictive man by nature, but with that man I mean to make it even some of these days. You know as well as I do what it is he has done to me, and you know also whether I have deserved it. Wretched reptile that he is! He has pretty nearly been able to ruin me,—and all from some petty feeling of jealousy."

"Finn, me boy, don't talk like that," said Laurence.

"You should n't show your hand," said Barrington.

"I know what you mean, and it 's all very well. After your different fashions you two have been true to me, and I don't care how much you see of my hand. That man's insolence angers me to such an extent that I cannot refrain from speaking out. He has n't spirit enough to go out with me, or I would shoot him."

"Blankenberg, eh!" said Laurence, alluding to the now notorious duel which had once been fought in that place between Phineas and Lord Chiltern.

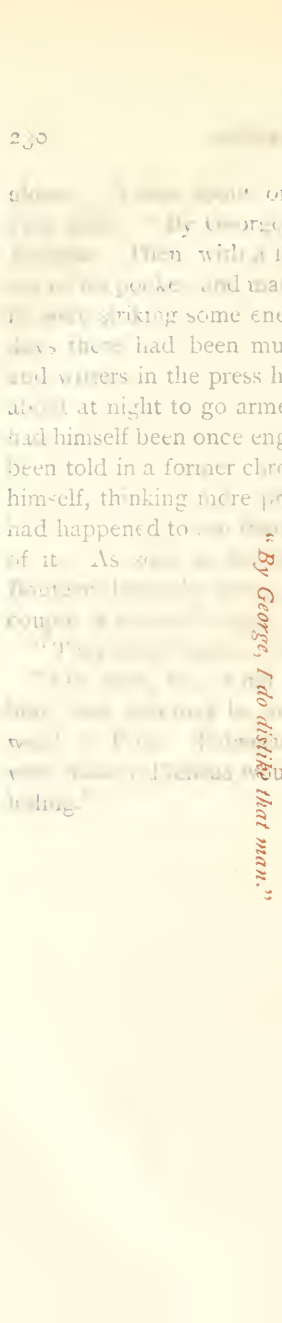
"I would," continued the angry man. "There are times in which one is driven to regret that there has come an end to duelling, and there is left to one no immediate means of resenting an injury."

As they were speaking Mr. Bonteen came out from the front door alone, and seeing the three men standing, passed on towards the left, eastwards. "Good night, Erle," he said, "Good night, Fitzgibbon." The two men answered him, and Phineas stood back in the

gloom. It was about one o'clock and the night was very dark. "By George, I do dislike that man," said Phineas. Then, with a laugh, he took a life-preserver out of his pocket, and made an action with it as though he were striking some enemy over the head. In those days there had been much garrotting in the streets, and writers in the press had advised those who walked about at night to go armed with sticks. Phineas Finn had himself been once engaged with garrotters,—as has been told in a former chronicle,—and had since armed himself, thinking more probably of the thing which he had happened to see than men do who had only heard of it. As soon as he had spoken, he followed Mr. Bonteen down the street, at the distance of perhaps a couple of hundred yards.

"They won't have a row,—will they?" said Erle.

"Oh dear, no; Finn won't think of speaking to him; and you may be sure that Bonteen won't say a word to Finn. Between you and me, Barrington, I wish Master Phineas would give him a thorough good hiding."



"By George, I do dislike that man."

Steeple Davis

CHAPTER XX.

WHAT CAME OF THE QUARREL.

On the next morning at seven o'clock, a superintendent of police called at the house of Mr. Gresham and informed the Prime Minister that Mr. Bonteen, the President of the Board of Trade, had been murdered during the night. There was no doubt of the fact. The body had been recognised, and information had been taken to the unfortunate widow at the house Mr. Bonteen had occupied in St. James's Place. The superintendent had already found out that Mr. Bonteen had been attacked as he was returning from his club late at night,—or rather, early in the morning, and expressed no doubt that he had been murdered close to the spot on which his body was found. There is a dark, uncanny-looking passage running from the end of Bolton Row, in May Fair, between the gardens of two great noblemen, coming out among the mews in Berkeley Street, at the corner of Berkeley Square, just opposite to the bottom of Hay Hill. It was on the steps leading up from the passage to the level of the ground above that the body was found. The passage was almost as near a way as any from the club to Mr. Bonteen's house in St. James's Place; but the superintendent declared that gentlemen but seldom used the passage after dark, and he was disposed to think that the unfortunate man must have been forced down the steps by the ruffian who had attacked him from the

level above. The murderer, so thought the superintendent, must have been cognisant of the way usually taken by Mr. Bonteen, and must have lain in wait for him in the darkness of the mouth of the passage. The superintendent had been at work on his inquiries since four in the morning, and had heard from Lady Eustace, —and from Mrs. Bonteen, as far as that poor distracted woman had been able to tell her story,—some account of the cause of quarrel between the respective husbands of those two ladies. The officer, who had not as yet heard a word of the late disturbance between Mr. Bonteen and Phineas Finn, was strongly of opinion that the Reverend Mr. Emilius had been the murderer. Mr. Gresham, of course, coincided in that opinion. What steps had been taken as to the arrest of Mr. Emilius? The superintendent was of opinion that Mr. Emilius was already in custody. He was known to be lodging close to the Marylebone Workhouse, in Northumberland Street, having removed to that somewhat obscure neighbourhood as soon as his house in Lowndes Square had been broken up by the running away of his wife and his consequent want of means. Such was the story as told to the Prime Minister at seven o'clock in the morning.

At eleven o'clock, at his private room at the Treasury Chambers, Mr. Gresham heard much more. At that time there were present with him two officers of the police force, his colleagues in the Cabinet, Lord Cantrip and the Duke of Omnium, three of his junior colleagues in the Government, Lord Fawn, Barrington Erle, and Laurence Fitzgibbon,—and Major Mackintosh, the chief of the London police. It was not exactly part of the duty of Mr. Gresham to investigate

the circumstances of this murder; but there was so much in it that brought it closely home to him and his Government, that it became impossible for him not to concern himself in the business. There had been so much talk about Mr. Bonteen lately, his name had been so common in the newspapers, the ill-usage which he had been supposed by some to have suffered had been so freely discussed, and his quarrel, not only with Phineas Finn, but subsequently with the Duke of Omnium, had been so widely known,—that his sudden death created more momentary excitement than might probably have followed that of a greater man. And now, too, the facts of the past night, as they became known, seemed to make the crime more wonderful, more exciting, more momentous than it would have been had it been brought cleorly home to such a wretch as the Bohemian Jew, Yosef Mealyus, who had contrived to cheat that wretched Lizzie Eustace into marrying him.

As regarded Yosef Mealyus the story now told respecting him was this. He was already in custody. He had been found in bed at his lodgings between seven and eight, and had, of course, given himself up without difficulty. He had seemed to be horror-struck when he heard of the man's death,—but had openly expressed his joy. "He has endeavoured to ruin me, and has done me a world of harm. Why should I sorrow for him?"—he said to the policeman, when rebuked for his inhumanity. But nothing had been found tending to implicate him in the crime. The servant declared that he had gone to bed before eleven o'clock to her knowledge,—for she had seen him there,—and that he had not left the house afterwards. Was

he in possession of a latch key? It appeared that he did usually carry a latch key, but then it was often borrowed from him by members of the family when it was known that he would not want it himself,—and that it had been so lent on this night. It was considered certain by those in the house that he had not gone out after he went to bed. Nobody in fact had left the house after ten; but in accordance with his usual custom Mr. Emilius had sent down the key as soon as he had found that he would not want it, and it had been all night in the custody of the mistress of the establishment. Nevertheless his clothes were examined minutely, but without affording any evidence against him. That Mr. Bonteen had been killed with some blunt weapon, such as a life-preserver, was assumed by the police, but no such weapon was in the possession of Mr. Emilius, nor had any such weapon yet been found. He was, however, in custody, with no evidence against him except that which was afforded by his known and acknowledged enmity to Mr. Bonteen.

So far Major Mackintosh and the two officers had told their story. Then came the united story of the other gentlemen assembled,—from hearing which, however, the two police officers were debarred. The Duke and Barrington Erle had both dined in company with Phineas Finn at Madame Goesler's, and the Duke was undoubtedly aware that ill blood had existed between Finn and Mr. Bonteen. Both Erle and Fitzgibbon described the quarrel at the club, and described also the anger which Finn had expressed against the wretched man as he stood talking at the club door. His gesture of vengeance was remembered and re-

peated, though both the men who heard it expressed their strongest conviction that the murder had not been committed by him. As Erle remarked, the very expression of such a threat was almost proof that he had not at that moment any intention on his mind of doing such a deed as had been done. But they told also of the life-preserver which Finn had shown them, as he took it from the pocket of his outside coat, and they marvelled at the coincidences of the night. Then Lord Fawn gave further evidence, which seemed to tell very hardly upon Phineas Finn. He also had been at the club, and had left it just before Finn and the two other men had clustered at the door. He had walked very slowly, having turned down Curzon Street and Bolton Row, from whence he made his way into Piccadilly by Clarges Street. He had seen nothing of Bonteen; but as he crossed over to Clarges Street he was passed at a very rapid pace by a man muffled in a topcoat, who made his way straight along Bolton Row towards the passage which has been described. At the moment he had not connected the person of the man who passed him with any acquaintance of his own; but he now felt sure,—after what he had heard,—that the man was Mr. Finn. As he passed out of the club Finn was putting on his overcoat, and Lord Fawn had observed the peculiarity of the grey colour. It was exactly a similar coat, only with its collar raised, that had passed him in the street. The man, too, was of Mr. Finn's height and build. He had known Mr. Finn well, and the man stepped with Mr. Finn's step. Major Mackintosh thought that Lord Fawn's evidence was—"very unfortunate as regarded Mr. Finn."

"I 'm d——d if that idiot won't hang poor Phinny,"

said Fitzgibbon afterwards to Erle. "And yet I don't believe a word of it."

"Fawn would n't lie for the sake of hanging Phineas Finn," said Erle.

"No;—I don't suppose he 's given to lying at all. He believes it all. But he 's such a muddle-headed fellow that he can get himself to believe anything. He 's one of those men who always unconsciously exaggerate what they have to say for the sake of the importance it gives them." It might be possible that a jury would look at Lord Fawn's evidence in this light; otherwise it would bear very heavily indeed against Phineas Finn.

Then a question arose as to the road which Mr. Bonteen usually took from the club. All the members who were there present had walked home with him at various times,—and by various routes, but never by theway through the passage. It was supposed that on this occasion he must have gone by Berkeley Square, because he had certainly not turned down by the first street to the right, which he would have taken had he intended to avoid the Square. He had been seen by Barrington Erle and Fitzgibbon to pass that turning. Otherwise they would have made no remark as to the possibility of a renewed quarrel between him and Phineas, should Phineas chance to overtake him;—for Phineas would certainly go by the Square unless taken out of his way by some special purpose. The most direct way of all for Mr. Bonteen would have been that followed by Lord Fawn; but as he had not turned down that street, and had not been seen by Lord Fawn, who was known to walk very slowly, and had often been seen to go by Berkeley Square,—it was presumed

that he had now taken that road. In this case he would certainly pass the end of the passage towards which Lord Fawn declared that he had seen the man hurrying whom he now supposed to have been Phineas Finn. Finn's direct road home would, as has been already said, have been through the Square, cutting off the corner of the Square, towards Bruton Street, and thence across Bond Street by Conduit Street to Regent Street, and so to Great Marlborough Street, where he lived. But it had been, no doubt, possible for him to have been on the spot on which Lord Fawn had seen the man; for, although in his natural course thither from the club he would have at once gone down the street to the right,—a course which both Erle and Fitzgibbon were able to say that he did not take, as they had seen him go beyond the turning,—nevertheless there had been ample time for him to have retraced his steps to it in time to have caught Lord Fawn, and thus to have deceived Fitzgibbon and Erle as to the route he had taken.

When they had got thus far, Lord Cantrip was standing close to the window of the room at Mr. Gresham's elbow. "Don't allow yourself to be hurried into believing it," said Lord Cantrip.

"I do not know that we need believe it, or the reverse. It is a case for the police."

"Of course it is;—but your belief and mine will have a weight. Nothing that I have heard makes me for a moment think it possible. I know the man."

"He was very angry."

"Had he struck him in the club, I should not have been much surprised; but he never attacked his enemy with a bludgeon in a dark alley. I know him well."

"What do you think of Fawn's story?"

"He was mistaken in his man. Remember;—it was a dark night."

"I do not see that you and I can do anything," said Mr. Gresham. "I shall have to say something in the House as to the poor fellow's death, but I certainly shall not express a suspicion. Why should I?"

Up to this moment nothing had been done as to Phineas Finn. It was known that he would in his natural course of business be in his place in Parliament at four, and Major Mackintosh was of opinion that he certainly should be taken before a magistrate in time to prevent the necessity of arresting him in the House. It was decided that Lord Fawn, with Fitzgibbon and Erle, should accompany the police officer to Bow Street, and that a magistrate should be applied to for a warrant if he thought the evidence was sufficient. Major Mackintosh was of opinion that, although by no possibility could the two men suspected have been jointly guilty of the murder, still the circumstances were such as to justify the immediate arrest of both. Were Yosef Mealyus really guilty and to be allowed to slip from their hands, no doubt it might be very difficult to catch him. Facts did not at present seem to prevail against him; but, as the Major observed, facts are apt to alter considerably when they are minutely sifted. His character was half sufficient to condemn him;—and then with him there was an adequate motive, and what Lord Cantrip regarded as "a possibility." It was not to be conceived that from mere rage Phineas Finn would lay a plot for murdering a man in the street. "It is on the cards, my lord," said the Major, "that he may have chosen to attack

Mr. Bonteen without intending to murder him. The murder may afterwards have been an accident."

It was impossible after this for even a Prime Minister and two Cabinet Ministers to go about their work calmly. The men concerned had been too well known to them to allow their minds to become clear of the subject. When Major Mackintosh went off to Bow Street with Erle and Laurence, it was certainly the opinion of the majority of those who had been present that the blow had been struck by the hand of Phineas Finn. And perhaps the worst aspect of it all was that there had been not simply a blow,—but blows. The constables had declared that the murdered man had been struck thrice about the head, and that the fatal stroke had been given on the side of his head after the man's hat had been knocked off. That Finn should have followed his enemy through the street, after such words as he had spoken, with the view of having the quarrel out in some shape, did not seem to be very improbable to any of them except Lord Cantrip;—and then had there been a scuffle, out in the open path, at the spot at which the angry man might have overtaken his adversary, it was not incredible to them that he should have drawn even such a weapon as a life-preserver from his pocket. But, in the case as it had occurred, a spot peculiarly traitorous had been selected, and the attack had too probably been made from behind. As yet there was no evidence that the murderer had himself encountered any ill-usage. And Finn, if he was the murderer, must, from the time he was standing at the club door, have contemplated a traitorous, dastardly attack. He must have counted his moments;—have returned slyly in the dark to the corner

of the street which he had once passed;—have muffled his face in his coat;—and have then laid wait in a spot to which an honest man at night would hardly trust himself with honest purposes. "I look upon it as quite out of the question," said Lord Cantrip, when the three Ministers were left alone. Now Lord Cantrip had served for many months in the same office as Phineas Finn.

"You are simply putting your own opinion of the man against the facts," said Mr. Gresham. "But facts always convince, and another man's opinion rarely convinces."

"I 'm not sure that we know the facts yet," asid the Duke.

"Of course we are speaking of them as far as they have been told to us. As far as they go,—unless they can be upset and shown not to be facts,—I fear they would be conclusive to me on a jury."

"Do you mean that you have heard enough to condemn him?" asked Lord Cantrip.

"Remember what we have heard. The murdered man had two enemies."

"He may have had a third."

"Or ten; but we have heard of but two."

"He may have been attacked for his money," said the Duke.

"But neither his money nor his watch were touched," continued Mr. Gresham. "Anger, or the desire of putting the man out of the way has caused the murder. Of the two enemies one,—according to the facts as we now have them,—could not have been there. Nor is it probable that he could have known that his enemy would be on that spot. The other not only could have

been there, but was certainly near the place at the moment,—so near that did he not do the deed himself, it is almost wonderful that it should not have been interrupted in its doing by his nearness. He certainly knew that the victim would be there. He was burning with anger against him at the moment. He had just threatened him. He had with him such an instrument as was afterwards used. A man believed to be him is seen hurrying to the spot by a witness whose credibility is beyond doubt. These are the facts such as we have them at present. Unless they can be upset, I fear they would convince a jury,—as they have already convinced those officers of the police."

"Officers of the police always believe men to be guilty," said Lord Cantrip.

"They don't believe the Jew clergyman to be guilty," said Mr. Gresham.

"I fear that there will be enough to send Mr. Finn to a trial," said the Duke.

"Not a doubt of it," said Mr. Gresham.

"And yet I feel as convinced of his innocence as I do of my own," said Lord Cantrip.

CHAPTER XXI.

MR. MAULE'S ATTEMPT.

About three o'clock in the day the first tidings of what had taken place reached Madame Goesler in the following perturbed note from her friend the Duchess: —"Have you heard what took place last night? Good God! Mr. Bonteen was murdered as he came home from his club, and they say that it was done by Phineas Finn. Plantagenet has just come in from Downing Street, where everybody is talking about it. I can't get from him what he believes. One never can get anything from him. But I never will believe it;—nor will you, I 'm sure. I vote we stick to him to the last. He is to be put in prison and tried. I can hardly believe that Mr. Bonteen has been murdered, though I don't know why he should n't as well as anybody else. Plantagenet talks about the great loss; I know which would be the greatest loss, and so do you. I 'm going out now to try and find out something. Barrington Erle was there, and if I can find him he will tell me. I shall be home by half-past five. Do come, there 's a dear woman; there is no one else I can talk to about it. If I 'm not back, go in all the same, and tell them to bring you tea.

"Only think of Lady Laura,—with one mad and the other in Newgate! G. P."

This letter gave Madame Goesler such a blow that for a few minutes it altogether knocked her down.

After reading it once she hardly knew what it contained beyond a statement that Phineas Finn was in Newgate. She sat for a while with it in her hands, almost swooning; and then with an effort she recovered herself, and read the letter again. Mr. Bonteen murdered, and Phineas Finn,—who had dined with her only yesterday evening, with whom she had been talking of all the sins of the murdered man, who was her special friend, of whom she thought more than of any other human being, of whom she could not bring herself to cease to think,—accused of the murder! Believe it! The Duchess had declared with that sort of enthusiasm which was common to her, that she never would believe it. No, indeed! What judge of character would any one be who could believe that Phineas Finn could be guilty of a midnight murder? "I vote we stick to him." "Stick to him!" Madame Goesler said, repeating the words to herself. "What is the use of sticking to a man who does not want you?" How can a woman cling to a man who, having said that he did not want her, yet comes again within her influence, but does not unsay what he had said before? Nevertheless, if it should be that the man was in real distress,—in absolutely dire sorrow,—she would cling to him with a constancy which, as she thought, her friend the Duchess would hardly understand. Though they should hang him, she would bathe his body with her tears, and live as a woman should live who had loved a murderer to the last.

But she swore to herself that she would not believe it. Nay, she did not believe it. Believe it, indeed! It was simply impossible. That he might have killed the wretch in some struggle brought on by the man's

own fault was possible. Had the man attacked Phineas Finn it was only too probable that there might have been such result. But murder, secret midnight murder, could not have been committed by the man she had chosen as her friend. And yet, through it all, there was a resolve that even though he should have committed murder she would be true to him. If it should come to the very worst, then would she declare the intensity of the affection with which she regarded the murderer. As to Mr. Bonteen, what the Duchess said was true enough; why should not he be killed as well as another? In her present frame of mind she felt very little pity for Mr. Bonteen. After a fashion, a verdict of "served him right" crossed her mind, as it had doubtless crossed that of the Duchess when she was writing her letter. The man had made himself so obnoxious that it was well that he should be out of the way. But not on that account would she believe that Phineas Finn had murdered him.

Could it be true that the man after all was dead? Marvellous reports, and reports marvellously false, do spread themselves about the world every day. But this report had come from the Duke, and he was not a man given to absurd rumours. He had heard the story in Downing Street, and if so it must be true. Of course she would go down to the Duchess at the hour fixed. It was now a little after three, and she ordered the carriage to be ready for her at a quarter past five. Then she told the servant, at first to admit no one who might call, and then to come up and let her know, if any one should come, without sending the visitor away. It might be that some one would come to her expressly from Phineas, or at least with tidings about this affair.

Then she read the letter again, and those few last words in it stuck to her thoughts like a burr. "Think of Lady Laura, with one mad and the other in Newgate." Was this man,—the only man whom she had ever loved,—more to Lady Laura Kennedy than to her; or rather, was Lady Laura more to him than was she herself? If so, why should she fret herself for his sake? She was ready enough to own that she could sacrifice everything for him, even though he should be standing as a murderer in the dock, if such sacrifice would be valued by him. He had himself told her that his feelings towards Lady Laura were simply those of an affectionate friend; but how could she believe that statement when all the world were saying the reverse? Lady Laura was a married woman,—a woman whose husband was still living,—and of course he was bound to make such an assertion when he and she were named together. And then it was certain,—Madame Goesler believed it to be certain, that there had been a time in which Phineas had asked for the love of Lady Laura Standish. But he had never asked for her love. It had been tendered to him, and he had rejected it! And now the Duchess,—who with all her inaccuracies, had that sharpness of vision which enables some men and women to see into facts,—spoke as though Lady Laura were to be pitied more than all others, because of the evil that had befallen Phineas Finn! Had not Lady Laura chosen her own husband; and was not the man, let him be ever so mad, still her husband! Madame Goesler was sore of heart, as well as broken down with sorrow, till at last hiding her face on the pillow of the sofa, still holding the Duchess's letter in her hand, she burst into a fit of hysteric sobs.

Few of those who knew Madame Max Goesler well, as she lived in town and in country, would have believed that such could have been the effect upon her of the news which she had heard. Credit was given to her everywhere for good nature, discretion, affability, and a certain grace of demeanour which always made her charming. She was known to be generous, wise, and of high spirit. Something of her conduct to the old Duke had crept into general notice, and had been told, here and there, to her honour. She had conquered the good opinion of many, and was a popular woman. But there was not one among her friends who supposed her capable of becoming a victim to a strong passion, or would have suspected her of reckless weeping for any sorrow. The Duchess, who thought that she knew Madame Goesler well, would not have believed it to be true, even if she had seen it. "You like people, but I don't think you ever love any one," the Duchess had once said to her. Madame Goesler had smiled, and had seemed to assent. To enjoy the world,—and to know that the best enjoyment must come from witnessing the satisfaction of others, had apparently been her philosophy. But now she was prostrate because this man was in trouble, and because she had been told that his trouble was more than another woman could bear!

She was still sobbing and crushing the letter in her hand when the servant came up to tell her that Mr. Maule had called. He was below, waiting to know whether she would see him. She remembering at once that Mr. Maule had met Phineas at her table on the previous evening, and thinking that he must have come with tidings respecting this great event, desired that he

might be shown up to her. But, as it happened, Mr. Maule had not yet heard of the death of Mr. Bonteen. He had remained at home till nearly four, having a great object in view, which made him deem it expedient that he should go direct from his own rooms to Madame Goesler's house, and had not even looked in at his club. The reader will, perhaps, divine the great object. On this day he proposed to ask Madame Goesler to make him the happiest of men,—as he certainly would have thought himself for a time, had she consented to put him in possession of her large income. He had therefore padded himself with more than ordinary care,—reduced but not obliterated the greyness of his locks,—looked carefully to the fitting of his trousers, and spared himself those ordinary labours of the morning which might have robbed him of any remaining spark of his juvenility.

Madame Goesler met him more than half across the room as he entered it. "What have you heard," said she. Mr. Maule wore his sweetest smile, but he had heard nothing. He could only press her hand, and look blank,—understanding that there was something which he ought to have heard. She thought nothing of the pressure of her hand. Apt as she was to be conscious at an instant of all that was going on around her, she thought of nothing now but that man's peril, and of the truth or falsehood of the story that had been sent to her. "You have heard nothing of Mr. Finn?"

"Not a word," said Mr. Maule, withdrawing his hand. "What has happened to Mr. Finn?" Had Mr. Finn broken his neck it would have been nothing to Mr. Maule. But the lady's solicitude was something to him.

"Mr. Bonteen has been——murdered!"

"Mr. Bonteen!"

"So I hear. I thought you had come to tell me of it."

"Mr. Bonteen murdered! No;—I have heard nothing. I do not know the gentleman. I thought you said—Mr. Finn."

"It is not known about London, then?"

"I cannot say, Madame Goesler. I have just come from home, and have not been out all the morning. Who has——murdered him?"

"Ah! I do not know. That is what I wanted you to tell me."

"But what of Mr. Finn?"

"I also have not been out, Mr. Maule, and can give you no information. I thought you had called because you knew that Mr. Finn had dined here."

"Has Mr. Finn been murdered?"

"Mr. Bonteen! I said that the report was that Mr. Bonteen had been murdered." Madame Goesler was now waxing angry,—most unreasonably. "But I know nothing about it, and am just going out to make inquiry. The carriage is ordered." Then she stood, expecting him to go; and he knew that he was expected to go. It was at any rate clear to him that he could not carry out his great design on the present occasion. "This has so upset me that I can think of nothing else at present, and you must, if you please, excuse me. I would not have let you take the trouble of coming up, had not I thought that you were the bearer of some news." Then she bowed, and Mr. Maule bowed; and as he left the room she forgot to ring the bell.

"What the deuce can she have meant about that fellow Finn?" he said to himself. "They cannot both

have been murdered." He went to his club, and there he soon learned the truth. The information was given to him with clear and undoubting words. Phineas Finn and Mr. Bonteen had quarrelled at the Universe. Mr. Bonteen, as far as words went, had got the best of his adversary. This had taken place in the presence of the Prince, who had expressed himself as greatly annoyed by Mr. Finn's conduct. And afterwards Phineas Finn had waylaid Mr. Bonteen, in the passage between Bolton Row and Berkeley Street, and had there——murdered him. As it happened, no one who had been at the Universe was at that moment present; but the whole affair was now quite well known, and was spoken of without a doubt.

"I hope he 'll be hung, with all my heart," said Mr. Maule, who thought that he could read the riddle which had been so unintelligible in Park Lane.

When Madame Goesler reached Carlton Terrace, which she did before the time named by the Duchess, her friend had not yet returned. But she went upstairs as she had been desired, and they brought her tea. But the teapot remained untouched till past six o'clock, and then the Duchess returned. "Oh, my dear, I am so sorry for being late. Why have n't you had tea?"

"What is the truth of it all?" said Madame Goesler, standing up with her fists clenched as they hung by her side.

"I don't seem to know nearly as much as I did when I wrote to you."

"Has the man been—murdered?"

"Oh dear, yes. There 's no doubt about that. I was quite sure of that when I sent the letter. I have

had such a hunt. But at last I went up to the door of the House of Commons, and got Barrington Erle to come out to me."

"Well?"

"Two men have been arrested."

"Not Phineas Finn?"

"Yes, Mr. Finn is one of them. Is it not awful? So much more dreadful to me than the other poor man's death! One ought n't to say so, of course."

"And who is the other man? Of course he did it."

"That horrid Jew preaching man that married Lizzie Eustace. Mr. Bonteen had been persecuting him, and making out that he had another wife at home in Hungary, or Bohemia, or somewhere."

"Of course he did it."

"That 's what I say. Of course the Jew did it. But then all the evidence goes to show that he did n't do it. He was in bed at the time; and the door of the house was locked up so that he could n't get out; and the man who did the murder had n't got on his coat, but had got on Phineas Finn's coat."

"Was there—blood?" asked Madame Goesler, shaking from head to foot.

"Not that I know. I don't suppose they 've looked yet. But Lord Fawn saw the man, and swears to the coat."

"Lord Fawn! How I have always hated that man! I would n't believe a word he would say."

"Barrington does n't think so much of the coat. But Phineas had a club in his pocket, and the man was killed by a club. There has n't been any other club found, but Phineas Finn took his home with him."

"A murderer would not have done that."

"Barrington says that the head policeman says that it is just what a very clever murderer would do."

"Do you believe it, Duchess?"

"Certainly not;—not though Lord Fawn swore that he had seen it. I never will believe what I don't like to believe, and nothing shall ever make me."

"He could n't have done it."

"Well;—for the matter of that, I suppose he could."

"No, Duchess, he could not have done it."

"He is strong enough,—and brave enough."

"But not enough of a coward. There is nothing cowardly about him. If Phineas Finn could have struck an enemy with a club, in a dark passage, behind his back, I will never care to speak to any man again. Nothing shall make me believe it. If I did I could never again believe in any one. If they told you that your husband had murdered a man, what would you say?"

"But he is n't your husband, Madame Max."

"No;—certainly not. I cannot fly at them, when they say so, as you would do. But I can be just as sure. If twenty Lord Fawns swore that they had seen it, I would not believe them. Oh, God, what will they do with him!"

The Duchess behaved very well to her friend, saying not a single word to twit her with the love which she betrayed. She seemed to take it as a matter of course that Madame Goesler's interest in Phineas Finn should be as it was. The Duke, she said, could not come home to dinner, and Madame Goesler should stay with her. Both houses were in such a ferment about the murder, that nobody liked to be away. Everybody had been struck with amazement, not simply,—not

chiefly,—by the fact of the murder, but by the double destruction of the two men whose ill-will to each other had been of late so often the subject of conversation. So Madame Goesler remained at Carlton Terrace till late in the evening, and during the whole visit there was nothing mentioned but the murder of Mr. Bonteen and the peril of Phineas Finn. "Some one will go and see him, I suppose," said Madame Goesler.

"Lord Cantrip has been already,—and Mr. Monk."

"Could not I go?"

"Well, it would be rather strong."

"If we both went together?" suggested Madame Goesler. And before she left Carlton Terrace she had almost extracted a promise from the Duchess that they would together proceed to the prison and endeavour to see Phineas Finn.

CHAPTER XXII.

SHOWING WHAT MRS. BUNCE SAID TO THE POLICEMAN.

"We have left Adelaide Palliser down at the Hall. We are up here only for a couple of days to see Laura, and try to find out what had better be done about Kennedy." This was said to Phineas Finn in his own room in Great Marlborough Street by Lord Chiltern, on the morning after the murder, between ten and eleven o'clock. Phineas had not as yet heard of the death of the man with whom he had quarrelled. Lord Chiltern had now come to him with some proposition which he as yet did not understand, and which Lord Chiltern certainly did not know how to explain. Looked at simply, the proposition was one for providing Phineas Finn with an income out of the wealth belonging, or that would belong, to the Standish family. Lady Laura's fortune would, it was thought, soon be at her own disposal. They who acted for her husband had assured the earl that the yearly interest of the money should be at her ladyship's command as soon as the law would allow them so to plan it. Of Robert Kennedy's inability to act for himself there was no longer any doubt whatever, and there was, they said, no desire to embarrass the estate with so small a disputed matter as the income derived from £40,000. There was great pride of purse in the manner in which the information was conveyed;—but not the less on that account was it satisfactory to the earl. Lady

Laura's first thought about it referred to the imminent wants of Phineas Finn. How might it be possible for her to place a portion of her income at the command of the man she loved so that he should not feel disgraced by receiving it from her hand? She conceived some plan as to a loan to be made nominally by her brother,—a plan as to which it may at once be said that it could not be made to hold water for a minute. But she did succeed in inducing her brother to undertake the embassy, with the view of explaining to Phineas that there would be money for him when he wanted it. "If I make it over to papa, papa can leave it him in his will; and if he wants it at once there can be no harm in your advancing to him what he must have at papa's death." Her brother had frowned angrily and had shaken his head. "Think how he has been thrown over by all the party," said Lady Laura. Lord Chiltern had disliked the whole affair,—had felt with dismay that his sister's name would become subject to reproach if it should be known that this young man was supported by her bounty. She, however, had persisted, and he had consented to see the young man, feeling sure that Phineas would refuse to bear the burden of the obligation.

But he had not touched the disagreeable subject when they were interrupted. A knocking of the door had been heard, and now Mrs. Bunce came upstairs, bringing Mr. Low with her. Mrs. Bunce had not heard of the tragedy, but she had at once perceived from the barrister's manner that there was some serious matter forward,—some matter that was probably not only serious, but also calamitous. The expression of her countenance announced as much to the two men, and

the countenance of Mr. Low when he followed her into the room told the same story still more plainly. "Is anything the matter?" said Phineas, jumping up.

"Indeed, yes," said Mr. Low, who then looked at Lord Chiltern, and was silent.

"Shall I go?" said Lord Chiltern. Mr. Low did not know him, and of course was still silent.

"This is my friend, Mr. Low. This is my friend, Lord Chiltern," said Phineas, aware that each was well acquainted with the other's name. "I do not know of any reason why you should go. What is it, Low?"

Lord Chiltern had come there about money, and it occurred to him that the impecunious young barrister might already be in some scrape on that head. In nineteen cases out of twenty, when a man is in a scrape, he simply wants money. "Perhaps I can be of help," he said.

"Have you heard, my lord, what happened last night?" said Mr. Low, with his eyes fixed on Phineas Finn.

"I have heard nothing," said Lord Chiltern.

"What has happened?" asked Phineas, looking aghast. He knew Mr. Low well enough to be sure that the thing referred to was of great and distressing moment.

"You, too, have heard nothing?"

"Not a word—that I know of."

"You were at the Universe last night?"

"Certainly I was."

"Did anything occur?"

"The Prince was there."

"Nothing has happened to the Prince?" said Chiltern.

"His name has not been mentioned to me," said Mr. Low. "Was there not a quarrel?"

"Yes;"—said Phineas. "I quarrelled with Mr. Bonteen."

"What then?"

"He behaved like a brute;—as he always does. Thrashing a brute hardly answers now-a-days, but if ever a man deserved a thrashing he does."

"He has been murdered," said Mr. Low.

The reader need hardly be told that, as regards this great offence, Phineas Finn was as white as snow. The maintenance of any doubt on that matter,—were it even desirable to maintain a doubt,—would be altogether beyond the power of the present writer. The reader has probably perceived, from the first moment of the discovery of the body on the steps at the end of the passage, that Mr. Bonteen had been killed by that ingenious gentleman, the Rev. Mr. Emilius, who found it to be worth his while to take the step with the view of suppressing his enemy's evidence as to his former marriage. But Mr. Low, when he entered the room, had been inclined to think that his friend had done the deed. Laurence Fitzgibbon, who had been one of the first to hear the story, and who had summoned Erle to go with him and Major Mackintosh to Downing Street, had, in the first place, gone to the house in Carey Street, in which Bunce was wont to work, and had sent him to Mr. Low. He, Fitzgibbon, had not thought it safe that he himself should warn his countryman, but he could not bear to think that the hare should be knocked over on its form, or that his friend should be taken by policemen without notice. So he had sent

Bunce to Mr. Low, and Mr. Low had now come with his tidings.

"Murdered!" exclaimed Phineas.

"Who has murdered him?" said Lord Chiltern, looking first at Mr. Low and then at Phineas.

"That is what the police are now endeavouring to find out." Then there was a pause, and Phineas stood up with his hand on his forehead, looking savagely from one to the other. A glimmer of an idea of the truth was beginning to cross his brain. Mr. Low was there with the object of asking him whether he had murdered the man! "Mr. Fitzgibbon was with you last night," continued Mr. Low.

"Of course he was."

"It was he who has sent me to you."

"What does it all mean?" asked Lord Chiltern. "I suppose they do not intend to say that,—our friend, here,—murdered the man."

"I begin to suppose that is what they intend to say," rejoined Phineas, scornfully.

Mr. Low had entered the room, doubting indeed, but still inclined to believe,—as Bunce had very clearly believed,—that the hands of Phineas Finn were red with the blood of this man who had been killed. And, had he been questioned on such a matter, when no special case was before his mind, he would have declared of himself that a few tones from the voice, or a few glances from the eye, of a suspected man would certainly not suffice to eradicate suspicion. But now he was quite sure,—almost quite sure,—that Phineas was as innocent as himself. To Lord Chiltern, who had heard none of the details, the suspicion was so

monstrous as to fill him with wrath. "You don't mean to tell us, Mr. Low, that any one says that Finn killed the man?"

"I have come as his friend," said Low, "to put him on his guard. The accusation will be made against him."

To Phineas, not clearly looking at it, not knowing very accurately what had happened, not being in truth quite sure that Mr. Bonteen was actually dead, this seemed to be a continuation of the persecution which he believed himself to have suffered from that man's hand. "I can believe anything from that quarter," he said.

"From what quarter?" asked Lord Chiltern. "We had better let Mr. Low tell us what really has happened."

Then Mr. Low told the story, as well as he knew it, describing the spot on which the body had been found. "Often as I go to the club," said Phineas, "I never was through that passage in my life." Mr. Low went on with his tale, telling how the man had been killed with some short bludgeon. "I had that in my pocket," said Finn, producing the life-preserver. "I have almost always had something of the kind when I have been in London, since that affair of Kennedy's." Mr. Low cast one glance at it,—to see whether it had been washed or scraped, or in any way cleansed. Phineas saw the glance, and was angry. "There it is, as it is. You can make the most of it. I shall not touch it again till the policeman comes. Don't put your hand on it, Chiltern. Leave it there." And the instrument was left lying on the table, untouched. Mr. Low went on with his story. He had heard nothing of Yosef Mealyus as connected with the murder, but some in-

distinct reference to Lord Fawn and the topcoat had been made to him. "There is the coat, too," said Phineas, taking it from the sofa on which he flung it when he came home the previous night. It was a very light coat,—fitted for May use,—lined with silk, and by no means suited for enveloping the face or person. But it had a collar which might be made to stand up. "That at any rate was the coat I wore," said Finn, in answer to some observation from the barrister. "The man that Lord Fawn saw," said Mr. Low, "was, as I understand, enveloped in a heavy greatcoat." "So Fawn has got his finger in the pie!" said Lord Chiltern.

Mr. Low had been there an hour, Lord Chiltern remaining also in the room, when there came three men belonging to the police,—a superintendent, and with him two constables. When the men were shown up into the room neither the bludgeon or the coat had been moved from the small table as Phineas had himself placed them there. Both Phineas and Chiltern had lit cigars, and they were all there sitting in silence. Phineas had entertained the idea that Mr. Low believed the charge, and that the barrister was therefore an enemy. Mr. Low had perceived this, but had not felt it to be his duty to declare his opinion of his friend's innocence. What he could do for his friend he would do; but, as he thought, he could serve him better now by silent observation than by protestation. Lord Chiltern, who had been implored by Phineas not to leave him, continued to pour forth unabating execrations on the monstrous malignity of the accusers. "I do not know that there are any accusers," said Mr. Low, "except the circumstances which the police must, of course, investigate." Then the men came, and the

nature of their duty was soon explained. They must request Mr. Finn to go with them to Bow Street. They took possession of many articles besides the two which had been prepared for them,—the dress coat and shirt which Phineas had worn, and the boots. He had gone out to dinner with a Gibus hat, and they took that. They took his umbrella and his latch key. They asked even as to his purse and money;—but abstained from taking the purse when Mr. Low suggested that they could have no concern with that. As it happened, Phineas was at the moment wearing the shirt in which he had dined out on the previous day, and the men asked him whether he had any objection to change it in their presence,—as it might be necessary, after the examination, that it should be detained as evidence. He did so, in the presence of all the men assembled; but the humiliation of doing it almost broke his heart. Then they searched among his linen, clean and dirty, and asked questions of Mrs. Bunce in audible whispers behind the door. Whatever Mrs. Bunce could do to injure the cause of her favourite lodger by severity of manner, snubbing the policeman, and determination to give no information, she did do. "Had a shirt washed? How do you suppose a gentleman's shirts are washed? You were brought up near enough to a washtub yourself to know more than I can tell you!" But the very respectable constable did not seem to be in the least annoyed by the landlady's amenities.

He was taken to Bow Street, going thither in a cab with the two policemen, and the superintendent followed them with Lord Chiltern and Mr. Low. "You don't mean to say that you believe it?" said Lord Chiltern to the officer. "We never believe and we never dis-

believe anything, my lord," replied the man. Nevertheless, the superintendent did most firmly believe that Phineas Finn had murdered Mr. Bonteen.

At the police-office Phineas was met by Lord Cantrip and Barrington Erle, and soon became aware that both Lord Fawn and Fitzgibbon were present. It seemed that everything else was made to give way to this inquiry, as he was at once confronted by the magistrate. Everybody was personally very civil to him, and he was asked whether he would not wish to have professional advice while the charge was being made against him. But this he declined. He would tell the magistrate, he said, all he knew, but, at any rate for the present, he would have no need of advice. He was, at last, allowed to tell his own story,—after repeated cautions. There had been some words between him and Mr. Bonteen in the club; after which, standing at the door of the club with his friends, Mr. Erle and Mr. Fitzgibbon, who were now in court, he had seen Mr. Bonteen walk away towards Berkeley Square. He had soon followed, but had never overtaken Mr. Bonteen. When reaching the Square he had crossed over to the fountain standing there on the south side, and from thence had taken the shortest way up Bruton Street. He had seen Mr. Bonteen for the last time dimly, by the gaslight, at the corner of the Square. As far as he could remember, he himself had at that moment passed the fountain. He had not heard the sound of any struggle, or of words, round the corner towards Piccadilly. By the time that Mr. Bonteen would have reached the head of the steps leading into the passage, he would have been near Bruton Street, with his back completely turned to the scene of the

murder. He had walked faster than Mr. Bonteen, having gradually drawn near to him; but he had determined in his own mind that he would not pass the man, or get so near him as to attract attention. Nor had he done so. He had certainly worn the grey coat which was now produced. The collar of it had not been turned up. The coat was nearly new, and to the best of his belief the collar had never been turned up. He had carried the life-preserver now produced with him because it had once before been necessary for him to attack garrotters in the street. The life-preserver had never been used, and, as it happened, was quite new. It had been bought about a month since,—in consequence of some commotion about garrotters which had just then taken place. But before the purchase of the life-preserver he had been accustomed to carry some stick or bludgeon at night. Undoubtedly he had quarrelled with Mr. Bonteen before this occasion, and had bought this instrument since the commencement of the quarrel. He had not seen any one on his way from the Square to his own house with sufficient observation to enable him to describe such person. He could not remember that he had passed a policeman on his way home.

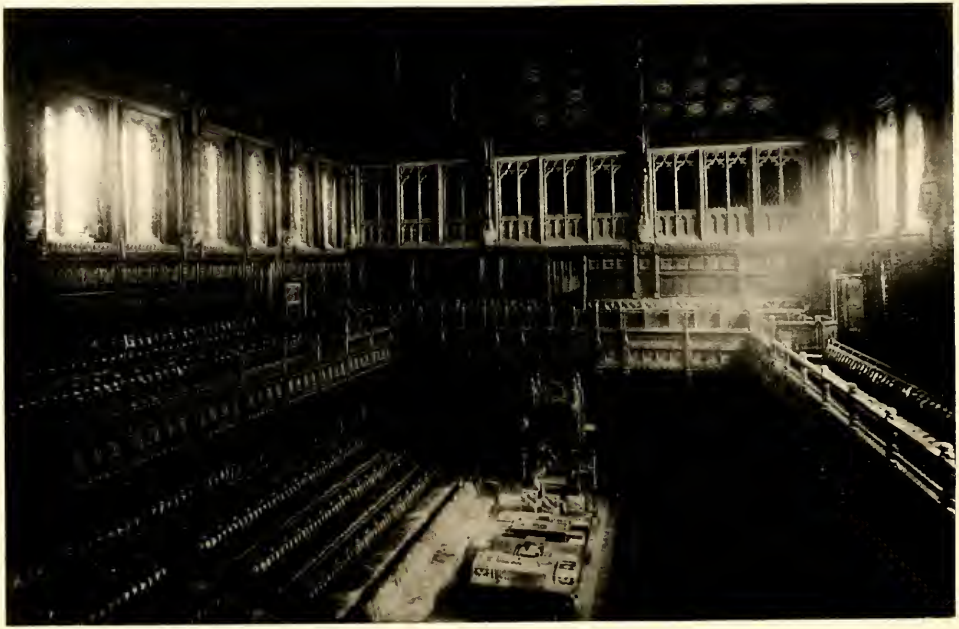
This took place after the hearing of such evidence as was then given. The statements made both by Erle and Fitzgibbon as to what had taken place in the club, and afterwards at the door, tallied exactly with that afterwards given by Phineas. An accurate measurement of the streets and ways concerned was already furnished. Taking the duration of time as surmised by Erle and Fitzgibbon to have passed after they had turned their back upon Phineas, a constable proved

that the prisoner would have had time to hurry back to the corner of the street he had passed, and to be in the place where Lord Fawn saw the man,—supposing that Lord Fawn had walked at the rate of three miles an hour, and that Phineas had walked or run at twice that pace. Lord Fawn stated that he was walking very slow,—less, he thought, than three miles an hour, and that the man was hurrying very fast,—not absolutely running, but going as he thought at quite double his own pace. Then two coats were shown to his lordship. Finn knew nothing of the other coat,—which had, in truth, been taken from the Rev. Mr. Emilius,—a rough, thick, brown coat, which had belonged to the preacher for the last two years. Finn's coat was grey in colour. Lord Fawn looked at the coats very attentively, and then said that the man he had seen had certainly not worn the brown coat. The night had been dark, but still he was sure that the coat had been grey. The collar had certainly been turned up. Then a tailor was produced who gave it as his opinion that Finn's coat had been lately worn with the collar raised.

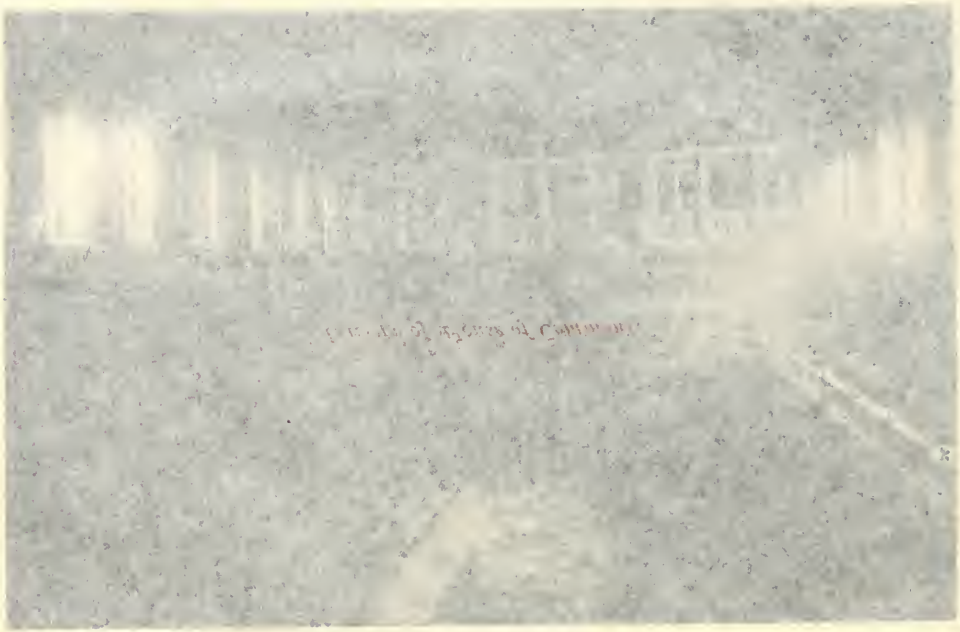
It was considered that the evidence given was sufficient to make a remand imperative, and Phineas Finn was committed to Newgate. He was assured that every attention should be paid to his comfort, and was treated with great consideration. Lord Cantrip, who still believed in him, discussed the subject both with the magistrate and with Major Mackintosh. Of course the strictest search would be made for a second life-preserver, or any such weapon as might have been used. Search had already been made, and no such weapon had been as yet found. Emilius never had been seen with any such weapon. No one about Curzon Street or

Mayfair could be found who had seen that man with the quick step and raised collar, who doubtless had been the murderer, except Lord Fawn,—so that no evidence was forthcoming tending to show that Phineas Finn could not have been that man. The evidence adduced to prove that Mr. Emilius,—or Mealyus, as he was henceforth called,—could not have been on the spot was so very strong, that the magistrate told the constables that that man must be released on the next examination unless something could be adduced against him.

The magistrate, with the profoundest regret, was unable to agree with Lord Cantrip in his opinion that the evidence adduced was not sufficient to demand the temporary committal of Mr. Finn.



Interior of House of Commons.



CHAPTER XXIII.

WHAT THE LORDS AND COMMONS SAID ABOUT THE MURDER.

When the House met on that Thursday at four o'clock, everybody was talking about the murder, and certainly four-fifths of the members had made up their minds that Phineas Finn was the murderer. To have known a murdered man is something, but to have been intimate with a murderer is certainly much more. There were many there who were really sorry for poor Bonteen,—of whom without a doubt the end had come in a very horrible manner; and there were more there who were personally fond of Phineas Finn,—to whom the future of the young member was very sad, and the fact that he should have become a murderer very awful. But, nevertheless, the occasion was not without its consolations. The business of the House is not always exciting, or even interesting. On this afternoon there was not a member who did not feel that something had occurred which added an interest to parliamentary life.

Very soon after prayers Mr. Gresham entered the House, and men who had hitherto been behaving themselves after a most unparliamentary fashion, standing about in knots, talking by no means in whispers, moving in and out of the House rapidly, all crowded into their places. Whatever pretence of business had been going on was stopped in a moment, and Mr.

Gresham rose to make his statement. "It was with the deepest regret,—nay, with the most profound sorrow,—that he was called upon to inform the House that his right honourable friend and colleague, Mr. Bonteen, had been basely and cruelly murdered during the past night." It was odd then to see how the name of the man, who, while he was alive and a member of that House, could not have been pronounced in that assembly without disorder, struck the members almost with dismay. "Yes, his friend Mr. Bonteen, who had so lately filled the office of President of the Board of Trade, and whose loss the country and that House could so ill bear, had been beaten to death in one of the streets of the metropolis by the arm of a dastardly ruffian during the silent watches of the night." Then Mr. Gresham paused, and every one expected that some further statement would be made. "He did not know that he had any further communication to make on the subject. Some little time must elapse before he could fill the office. As for adequately supplying the loss, that would be impossible. Mr. Bonteen's services to the country, especially in reference to decimal coinage, were too well known to the House to allow of his holding out any such hope." Then he sat down without having as yet made an allusion to Phineas Finn.

But the allusion was soon made. Mr. Daubeny rose, and with much graceful and mysterious circumlocution asked the Prime Minister whether it was true that a member of the House had been arrested, and was now in confinement on the charge of having been concerned in the murder of the late much-lamented President of the Board of Trade. He,—Mr. Daubeny,—had been given to understand that such a charge had

been made against an honourable member of that House who had once been a colleague of Mr. Bonteen's, and who had always supported the right honourable gentleman opposite. Then Mr. Gresham rose again. "He regretted to say that the honourable member for Tankerville was in custody on that charge. The House would of course understand that he only made that statement as a fact, and that he was offering no opinion as to who was the perpetrator of the murder. The case seemed to be shrouded in great mystery. The two gentlemen had unfortunately differed, but he did not at all think that the House would on that account be disposed to attribute guilt so black and damning to a gentleman they had all known so well as the honourable member for Tankerville." So much and no more was spoken publicly, to the reporters; but members continued to talk about the affair the whole evening.

There was nothing, perhaps, more astonishing than the absence of rancour or abhorrence with which the name of Phineas was mentioned, even by those who felt most certain of his guilt. All those who had been present at the club acknowledged that Bonteen had been the sinner in reference to the transaction there; and it was acknowledged to have been almost a public misfortune that such a man as Bonteen should have been able to prevail against such a one as Phineas Finn in regard to the presence of the latter in the Government. Stories which were exaggerated, accounts worse even than the truth, were bandied about as to the perseverance with which the murdered man had destroyed the prospects of the supposed murderer, and robbed the country of the services of a good workman. Mr. Gresham, in the official statement which he had made,

had, as a matter of course, said many fine things about Mr. Bonteen. A man can always have fine things said about him for a few hours after his death. But in the small private conferences which were held the fine things said all referred to Phineas Finn. Mr. Gresham had spoken of a "dastardly ruffian in the silent watches," but one would have almost thought from overhearing what was said by various gentlemen in different parts of the House that upon the whole Phineas Finn was thought to have done rather a good thing in putting poor Mr. Bonteen out of the way.

And another pleasant feature of excitement was added by the prevalent idea that the Prince had seen and heard the row. Those who had been at the club at the time of course knew that this was not the case; but the presence of the Prince at the Universe between the row and the murder had really been a fact, and therefore it was only natural that men should allow themselves the delight of mixing the Prince with the whole concern. In remote circles the Prince was undoubtedly supposed to have had a great deal to do with the matter, though whether as abettor of the murdered or of the murderer was never plainly declared. A great deal was said about the Prince that evening in the House, so that many members were able to enjoy themselves thoroughly.

"What a godsend for Gresham," said one gentleman to Mr. Rattler, very shortly after the strong eulogium which had been uttered on poor Mr. Bonteen by the Prime Minister.

"Well,—yes; I was afraid that the poor fellow would never have got on with us."

"Got on! He 'd have been a thorn in Gresham's

side as long as he held office. If Finn should be acquitted, you ought to do something handsome for him." Whereupon Mr. Rattler laughed heartily.

"It will pretty nearly break them up," said Sir Orlando Drought, one of Mr. Daubeny's late secretaries of state, to Mr. Roby, Mr. Daubeny's late patronage secretary.

"I don't quite see that. They 'll be able to drop their decimal coinage with a good excuse, and that will be a great comfort. They are talking of getting Monk to go back to the Board of Trade."

"Will that strengthen them?"

"Bonteen would have weakened them. The man had got beyond himself, and lost his head. They are better without him."

"I suppose Finn did it?" asked Sir Orlando.

"Not a doubt about it, I 'm told. The queer thing is that he should have declared his purpose beforehand to Erle. Gresham says that all that must have been part of his plan,—so as to make men think afterwards that he could n't have done it. Grogram's idea is that he had planned the murder before he went to the club."

"Will the Prince have to give evidence?"

"No, no," said Mr. Roby. "That 's all wrong. The Prince had left the club before the row commenced. Confucius Putt says that the Prince did n't hear a word of it. He was talking to the Prince all the time." Confucius Putt was the distinguished artist with whom the Prince had shaken hands on leaving the club.

Lord Drummond was in the peers' gallery, and Mr. Boffin was talking to him over the railings. It may be remembered that those two gentlemen had conscientiously left Mr. Daubeny's Cabinet because they had

been unable to support him in his views about the Church. After such sacrifice on their parts their minds were of course intent on Church matters. "There does n't seem to be a doubt about it," said Mr. Boffin.

"Cantrip won't believe it," said the peer.

"He was at the Colonies with Cantrip, and Cantrip found him very agreeable. Everybody says that he was one of the pleasantest fellows going. This makes it out of the question that they should bring in any Church Bill this session."

"Do you think so?"

"Oh yes;—certainly. There will be nothing else thought of now till the trial."

"So much the better," said his lordship. "It 's an ill wind that blows no one any good. Will they have evidence for a conviction?"

"Oh dear, yes; not a doubt about it. Fawn can swear to him," said Mr. Boffin.

Barrington Erle was telling his story for the tenth time when he was summoned out of the library to the Duchess of Omnium, who had made her way up into the lobby. "Oh, Mr. Erle, do tell me what you really think," said the Duchess.

"That is just what I can't do."

"Why not?"

"Because I don't know what to think."

"He can't have done it, Mr. Erle."

"That 's just what I say to myself, Duchess."

"But they do say that the evidence is so very strong against him."

"Very strong."

"I wish we could get that Lord Fawn out of the way."

"Ah;—but we can't."

"And will they—hang him?"

"If they convict him, they will."

"A man we all knew so well! And just when we had made up our minds to do everything for him. Do you know I am not a bit surprised. I 've felt before now as though I should like to have done it myself."

"He could be very nasty, Duchess!"

"I did so hate that man. But I 'd give,—oh, I don't know what I 'd give to bring him to life again this minute. What will Lady Laura do?" In answer to this, Barrington Erle only shrugged his shoulders. Lady Laura was his cousin. "We must n't give him up, you know, Mr. Erle."

"What can we do?"

"Surely we can do something. Can't we get it in the papers that he must be innocent,—so that everybody should be made to think so? And if we could get hold of the lawyers, and make them not want to—to destroy him! There 's nothing I would n't do. There 's no getting hold of a judge, I know."

"No, Duchess. The judges are stone."

"Not that they are a bit better than anybody else,—only they like to be safe."

"They do like to be safe."

"I 'm sure we could do it if we put our shoulders to the wheel. I don't believe, you know, for a moment that he murdered him. It was done by Lizzie Eustace's Jew."

"It will be sifted, of course."

"But what 's the use of sifting if Mr. Finn is to be hung while it 's being done? I don't think anything of the police. Do you remember how they bungled

about that woman's necklace? I don't mean to give him up, Mr. Erle; and I expect you to help me." Then the Duchess returned home, and, as we know, found Madame Goesler at her house.

Nothing whatever was done that night either in the Lords or Commons. A "statement" about Mr. Bonteen was made in the Upper as well as in the Lower House, and after that statement any real work was out of the question. Had Mr. Bonteen absolutely been Chancellor of the Exchequer, and in the Cabinet when he was murdered, and had Phineas Finn been once more an Under-Secretary of State, the commotion and excitement could hardly have been greater. Even the Duke of St. Bungay had visited the spot,—well known to him, as there the urban domains meet of two great whig peers, with whom and whose predecessors he had long been familiar. He also had known Phineas Finn, and not long since had said civil words to him and of him. He, too, had of late days especially disliked Mr. Bonteen, and had almost insisted that the man now murdered should not be admitted into the Cabinet. He had heard what was the nature of the evidence;—had heard of the quarrel, the life-preserver, and the grey coat. "I suppose he must have done it," said the Duke of St. Bungay to himself as he walked away up Hay Hill.

CHAPTER XXIV.

"YOU THINK IT SHAMEFUL."

THE tidings of what had taken place first reached Lady Laura Kennedy from her brother on his return to Portman Square after the scene in the police court. The object of his visit to Finn's lodgings had been explained, but the nature of Lady Laura's vehemence in urging upon her brother the performance of a very disagreeable task has not been sufficiently described. No brother would willingly go on such a mission from a married sister to a man who had been publicly named as that sister's lover;—and no brother could be less likely to do so than Lord Chiltern. But Lady Laura had been very stout in her arguments, and very strong-willed in her purpose. The income arising from his money,—which had been absolutely her own,—would again be exclusively her own should the claim to it on behalf of her husband's estate be abandoned. Surely she might do what she liked with her own. If her brother would not assist her in making this arrangement, it must be done by other means. She was quite willing that it should appear to come to Mr. Finn from her father and not from herself. Did her brother think any ill of her? Did he believe in the calumnies of the newspapers? Did he or his wife for a moment conceive that she had a lover? When he looked at her, worn out, withered, an old woman before her time, was it possible that he should so believe? She herself

asked him these questions. Lord Chiltern of course declared that he had no suspicion of the kind. "No;—indeed," said Lady Laura. "I defy any one to suspect me who knows me. And if so, why am not I as much entitled to help a friend as you might be? You need not even mention my name." He endeavoured to make her understand that her name would be mentioned, and others would believe and would say evil things. "They cannot say worse than they have said," she continued. "And yet what harm have they done to me or you?" Then he demanded why she desired to go so far out of her way with the view of spending her money upon one who was in no way connected with her. "Because I like him better than any one else," she answered boldly. "There is very little left for which I care at all;—but I do care for his prosperity. He was once in love with me and told me so,—but I had chosen to give my hand to Mr. Kennedy. He is not in love with me now,—nor I with him; but I choose to regard him as my friend." He assured her over and over again that Phineas would certainly refuse to touch her money;—but this she declined to believe. At any rate the trial might be made. He would not refuse money left to him by will, and why should he not now enjoy that which was intended for him? Then she explained how certain it was that he must speedily vanish out of the world altogether, unless some assurance of an income were made to him. So Lord Chiltern went on his mission, hardly meaning to make the offer, and confident that it would be refused if made. We know the nature of the new trouble in which he found Phineas Finn enveloped. It was such that Lord Chiltern did not open his mouth about

money, and now, having witnessed the scene at the police-office, he had come back to tell his tale to his sister. She was sitting with his wife when he entered the room.

"Have you heard anything?" he asked at once.

"Heard what?" said his wife.

"Then you have not heard it. A man has been murdered."

"What man?" said Lady Laura, jumping suddenly from her seat. "Not Robert!" Lord Chiltern shook his head. "You do not mean that Mr. Finn has been ——killed!" Again he shook his head; and then she sat down as though the asking of the two questions had exhausted her.

"Speak, Oswald," said his wife. "Why do you not tell us? Is it one whom we knew?"

"I think that Laura used to know him. Mr. Bonteen was murdered last night in the streets."

"Mr. Bonteen! The man who was Mr. Finn's enemy," said Lady Chiltern.

"Mr. Bonteen!" said Lady Laura, as though the murder of twenty Mr. Bonteens were nothing to her.

"Yes;—the man whom you talk of as Finn's enemy. It would be better if there were no such talk."

"And who killed him?" said Lady Laura, again getting up and coming close to her brother.

"Who was it, Oswald?" asked his wife; and she also was now too deeply interested to keep her seat.

"They have arrested two men," said Lord Chiltern; —"that Jew who married Lady Eustace, and——" But there he paused. He had determined beforehand that he would tell his sister the double arrest, that the doubt this implied might lessen the weight of the blow;

but now he found it almost impossible to mention the name.

"Who is the other, Oswald?" said his wife.

"Not Phineas," screamed Lady Laura.

"Yes, indeed; they have arrested him, and I have just come from the court." He had no time to go on, for his sister was crouching prostrate on the floor before him. She had not fainted. Women do not faint under such shocks. But in her agony she had crouched down rather than fallen, as though it were vain to attempt to stand upright with so crushing a weight of sorrow on her back. She uttered one loud shriek, and then covering her face with her hands burst out into a wail of sobs. Lady Chiltern and her brother both tried to raise her, but she would not be lifted. "Why will you not hear me through, Laura?" said he.

"You do not think he did it?" said his wife.

"I 'm sure he did not," replied Lord Chiltern.

The poor woman, half lying, half seated, on the floor, still hiding her face with her hands, still bursting with half-suppressed sobs, heard and understood both the question and the answer. But the fact was not altered to her,—nor the condition of the man she loved. She had not yet begun to think whether it were possible that he should have been guilty of such a crime. She had heard none of the circumstances, and knew nothing of the manner of the man's death. It might be that Phineas had killed the man, bringing himself within the reach of the law, and that yet he should have done nothing to merit her reproaches;—hardly even her reprobation! Hitherto she felt only the sorrow, the annihilation of the blow;—but not the shame

with which it would overwhelm the man for whom she so much coveted the good opinion of the world.

"You hear what he says, Laura."

"They are determined to destroy him," she sobbed out, through her tears.

"They are not determined to destroy him at all," said Lord Chiltern. "It will have to go by evidence. You had better sit up and let me tell you all. I will tell you nothing till you are seated again. You disgrace yourself by sprawling there."

"Do not be hard to her, Oswald."

"I am disgraced," said Lady Laura, slowly rising and placing herself again on the sofa. "If there is anything more to tell, you can tell it. I do not care what happens to me now, or who knows it. They cannot make my life worse than it is."

Then he told all the story,—of the quarrel, and the position of the streets, of the coat, and the bludgeon, and the three blows, each on the head, by which the man had been killed. And he told them also how the Jew was said never to have been out of his bed, and how the Jew's coat was not the coat Lord Fawn had seen, and how no stain of blood had been found about the raiment of either of the men. "It was the Jew who did it, Oswald, surely," said Lady Chiltern.

"It was not Phineas Finn who did it," he replied.

"And they will let him go again?"

"They will let him go when they find out the truth, I suppose. But those fellows blunder so, I would never trust them. He will get some sharp lawyer to look into it; and then perhaps everything will come out. I shall go and see him to-morrow. But there is nothing further to be done."

"And I must see him," said Lady Laura slowly.

Lady Chiltern looked at her husband, and his face became redder than usual with an angry flush. When his sister had pressed him to take her message about the money, he had assured her that he suspected her of no evil. Nor had he ever thought evil of her. Since her marriage with Mr. Kennedy, he had seen but little of her or of her ways of life. When she had separated herself from her husband he had approved of the separation, and had even offered to assist her should she be in difficulty. While she had been living a sad lonely life at Dresden, he had simply pitied her, declaring to himself and his wife that her lot in life had been very hard. When these calumnies about her and Phineas Finn had reached his ears,—or his eyes,—as such calumnies always will reach the ears and eyes of those whom they are most capable of hurting, he had simply felt a desire to crush some Quintus Slide, or the like, into powder for the offence. He had received Phineas in his own house with all his old friendship. He had even this morning been with the accused man as almost his closest friend. But, nevertheless, there was creeping into his heart a sense of the shame with which he would be afflicted, should the world really be taught to believe that the man had been his sister's lover. Lady Laura's distress on the present occasion was such as a wife might show, or a girl weeping for her lover, or a mother for her son, or a sister for a brother; but was extravagant and exaggerated in regard to such friendship as might be presumed to exist between the wife of Mr. Robert Kennedy and the member for Tankerville. He could see that his wife felt this as he did, and he thought it

necessary to say something at once that might force his sister to moderate at any rate her language, if not her feelings. Two expressions of face were natural to him; one eloquent of good humour, in which the reader of countenances would find some promise of coming frolic;—and the other, replete with anger, sometimes to the extent almost of savagery. All those who were dependent on him were wont to watch his face with care, and sometimes with fear. When he was angry it would almost seem that he was about to use personal violence on the object of his wrath. At the present moment he was rather grieved than enraged; but there came over his face that look of wrath with which all who knew him were so well acquainted. "You cannot see him," he said.

"Why not I, as well as you?"

"If you do not understand, I cannot tell you. But you must not see him;—and you shall not."

"Who will hinder me?"

"If you put me to it, I will see that you are hindered. What is the man to you that you should run the risk of evil tongues, for the sake of visiting him in gaol? You cannot save his life,—though it may be that you might endanger it."

"Oswald," she said, very slowly, "I do not know that I am in any way under your charge, or bound to submit to your orders."

"You are my sister."

"And I have loved you as a sister. How should it be possible that my seeing him should endanger his life?"

"It will make people think that the things are true which have been said."

"And will they hang him because I love him? I

do love him. Violet knows how well I have always loved him?" Lord Chiltern turned his angry face upon his wife. Lady Chiltern put her arm round her sister-in-law's waist, and whispered some words into her ear. "What is that to me?" continued the half-frantic woman. "I do love him. I have always loved him. I shall love him to the end. He is all my life to me."

"Shame should prevent your telling it," said Lord Chiltern.

"I feel no shame. There is no disgrace in love. I did disgrace myself when I gave the hand for which he asked to another man, because,—because——" But she was too noble to tell her brother even then that at the moment of her life to which she was alluding she had married the rich man, rejecting the poor man's hand, because she had given up all her fortune to the payment of her brother's debts. And he, though he had well known what he had owed to her, and had never been easy till he had paid the debt, remembered nothing of all this now. No lending and paying back of money could alter the nature either of his feelings or his duty in such an emergency as this. "And, mind you," she continued, turning to her sister-in-law, "there is no place for the shame of which he is thinking," and she pointed her finger out at her brother. "I love him,—as a mother might love her child, I fancy; but he has no love for me; none;—none. When I am with him, I am only a trouble to him. He comes to me, because he is good, but he would sooner be with you. He did love me once;—but then I could not afford to be so loved."

"You can do no good by seeing him," said her brother.

"But I will see him. You need not scowl at me as though you wished to strike me. I have gone through that which makes me different from other women, and I care not what they say of me. Violet understands it all;—but you understand nothing."

"Be calm, Laura," said her sister-in-law, "and Oswald will do all that can be done."

"But they will hang him."

"Nonsense!" said her brother. "He has not been as yet committed for his trial. Heaven knows how much has to be done. It is as likely as not that in three days' time he will be out at large, and all the world will be running after him just because he has been in Newgate."

"But who will look after him?"

"He has plenty of friends. I will see that he is not left without everything that he wants."

"But he will want money."

"He has plenty of money for that. Do you take it quietly, and not make a fool of yourself. If the worst comes to the worst——"

"Oh, heavens!"

"Listen to me, if you can listen. Should the worst come to the worst, which I believe to be altogether impossible,—mind, I think it next to impossible, for I have never for a moment believed him to be guilty,—we will,—visit him,—together. Good-bye now. I am going to see that friend of his, Mr. Low." So saying Lord Chiltern went, leaving the two women together.

"Why should he be so savage with me?" said Lady Laura.

"He does not mean to be savage."

"Does he speak to you like that? What right has

he to tell me of shame? Has my life been so bad, and his so good? Do you think it shameful that I should love this man?" She sat looking into her friend's face, but her friend for a while hesitated to answer. "You shall tell me, Violet. We have known each other so well that I can bear to be told by you. Do not you love him?"

"I love him!—certainly not."

"But you did."

"Not as you mean. Who can define love, and say what it is? There are so many kinds of love. We say that we love the Queen."

"Psha!"

"And we are to love all our neighbours. But as men and women talk of love, I never at any moment of my life loved any man but my husband. Mr. Finn was a great favourite with me,—always."

"Indeed he was."

"As any other man might be,—or any woman. He is so still, and with all my heart I hope that this may be untrue."

"It is false as the devil. It must be false. Can you think of the man,—his sweetness, the gentle nature of him, his open, free speech, and courage, and believe that he would go behind his enemy and knock his brains out in the dark? I can conceive it of myself, that I should do it, much easier than of him."

"Oswald says it is false."

"But he says it as partly believing that it is true. If it be true I will hang myself. There will be nothing left among men or women fit to live for. You think it shameful that I should love him."

"I have not said so."

"But you do."

"I think there is cause for shame in your confessing it."

"I do confess it."

"You ask me, and press me, and because we have loved one another so well, I must answer you. If a woman,—a married woman,—be oppressed by such a feeling, she should lay it down at the bottom of her heart, out of sight, never mentioning it, even to herself."

"You talk of the heart as though we could control it."

"The heart will follow the thoughts, and they may be controlled. I am not passionate, perhaps, as you are, and I think I can control my heart. But my fortune has been kind to me, and I have never been tempted. Laura, do not think I am preaching to you."

"Oh no;—but your husband; think of him, and think of mine! You have babies."

"May God make me thankful. I have every good thing on earth that God can give."

"And what have I? To see that man prosper in life, who they tell me is a murderer; that man who is now in a felon's gaol,—whom they will hang for aught we know,—to see him go forward and justify my thoughts of him! that yesterday was all I had. To-day I have nothing,—except the shame with which you and Oswald say that I have covered myself."

"Laura, I have never said so."

"I saw it in your eye when he accused me. And I know that it is shameful. I do know that I am covered with shame. But I can bear my own disgrace better than his danger." After a long pause,—a silence of

probably some fifteen minutes,—she spoke again. "If Robert should die,—what would happen then?"

"It would be—a release, I suppose," said Lady Chiltern in a voice so low, that it was almost a whisper.

"A release indeed;—and I would become that man's wife the next day, at the foot of the gallows;—if he would have me. But he would not have me."

CHAPTER XXV.

MR. KENNEDY'S WILL.

Mr. Kennedy had fired a pistol at Phineas Finn in Macpherson's Hotel with the manifest intention of blowing out the brains of his presumed enemy, and no public notice had been taken of the occurrence. Phineas himself had been only too willing to pass the thing by as a trifling accident, if he might be allowed to do so, and the Macphersons had been by far too true to their great friend to think of giving him in charge to the police. The affair had been talked about, and had come to the knowledge of reporters and editors. Most of the newspapers had contained paragraphs giving various accounts of the matter; and one or two had followed the example of the People's Banner in demanding that the police should investigate the matter. But the matter had not been investigated. The police were supposed to know nothing about it,—as how should they, no one having seen or heard the shot but they who were determined to be silent? Mr. Quintus Slide had been indignant all in vain, so far as Mr. Kennedy and his offence had been concerned. As soon as the pistol had been fired and Phineas had escaped from the room, the unfortunate man had sunk back in his chair, conscious of what he had done, knowing that he had made himself subject to the law, and expecting every minute that constables would enter the room to seize him. He had seen his enemy's hat lying

on the floor, and, when nobody would come to fetch it, had thrown it down the stairs. After that he had sat waiting for the police, with the pistol, still loaded in every barrel but one, lying by his side,—hardly repenting the attempt, but trembling for the result,—till Macpherson, the landlord, who had been brought home from chapel, knocked at his door. There was very little said between them; and no positive allusion was made to the shot that had been fired; but Macpherson succeeded in getting the pistol into his possession,—as to which the unfortunate man put no impediment in his way, and he managed to have it understood that Mr. Kennedy's cousin should be summoned on the following morning. "Is anybody else coming?" Robert Kennedy asked, when the landlord was about to leave the room. "Naebody as I ken o', yet, laird," said Macpherson, "but likes they will." Nobody, however, did come, and the "laird" had spent the evening by himself in very wretched solitude.

On the following day the cousin had come, and to him the whole story was told. After that, no difficulty was found in taking the miserable man back to Loughlinter, and there he had been for the last two months in the custody of his more wretched mother and of his cousin. No legal steps had been taken to deprive him of the management either of himself or of his property,—so that he was in truth his own master. And he exercised his mastery in acts of petty tyranny about his domain, becoming more and more close-fisted in regard to money, and desirous, as it appeared, of starving all living things about the place,—cattle, sheep, and horses, so that the value of their food might be saved. But every member of the establishment knew that the laird

was "nae just himself," and consequently his orders were not obeyed. And the laird knew the same of himself, and, though he would give the orders not only resolutely, but with imperious threats of penalties to follow disobedience, still he did not seem to expect compliance. While he was in this state, letters addressed to him came for a while into his own hands, and thus more than one reached him from Lord Brentford's lawyer, demanding that restitution should be made of the interest arising from Lady Laura's fortune. Then he would fly out into bitter wrath, calling his wife foul names, and swearing that she should never have a farthing of his money to spend upon her paramour. Of course it was his money, and his only. All the world knew that. Had she not left his roof, breaking her marriage vows, throwing aside every duty, and bringing him down to his present state of abject misery? Her own fortune! If she wanted the interest of her wretched money, let her come to Loughlinter and receive it there. In spite of all her wickedness, her cruelty, her misconduct, which had brought him,—as he now said,—to the verge of the grave, he would still give her shelter and room for repentance. He recognised his vows, though she did not. She should still be his wife, though she had utterly disgraced both herself and him. She should still be his wife, though she had so lived as to make it impossible that there should be any happiness in their household.

It was thus he spoke when first one and then another letter came from the Earl's lawyer, pointing out to him the injustice to which Lady Laura was subjected by the loss of her fortune. No doubt these letters would not have been written in the line assumed had not Mr.

Kennedy proved himself to be unfit to have the custody of his wife by attempting to shoot the man whom he accused of being his wife's lover. An act had been done, said the lawyer, which made it quite out of the question that Lady Laura should return to her husband. To this, when speaking of the matter to those around him,—which he did with an energy which seemed to be foreign to his character,—Mr. Kennedy made no direct allusion; but he swore most positively that not a shilling should be given up. The fear of policemen coming down to Loughlinter to take account of that angry shot had passed away; and, though he knew, with an uncertain knowledge, that he was not in all respects obeyed as he used to be,—that his orders were disobeyed by stewards and servants, in spite of his threats of dismissal,—he still felt that he was sufficiently his own master to defy the Earl's attorney and to maintain his claim upon his wife's person. Let her return to him first of all!

But after a while the cousin interfered still further; and Robert Kennedy, who so short a time since had been a member of the Government, graced by permission to sit in the Cabinet, was not allowed to open his own post-bag. He had written a letter to one person, and then again to another, which had induced those who received them to return answers to the cousin. To Lord Brentford's lawyer he had used a few very strong words. Mr. Forster had replied to the cousin, stating how grieved Lord Brentford would be, how much grieved would be Lady Laura, to find themselves driven to take steps in reference to what they conceived to be the unfortunate condition of Mr. Robert Kennedy; but that such steps must be taken

unless some arrangement could be made which should be at any rate reasonable. Then Mr. Kennedy's post-bag was taken from him; the letters which he wrote were not sent;—and he took to his bed. It was during this condition of affairs that the cousin took upon himself to intimate to Mr. Forster that the managers of Mr. Kennedy's estate were by no means anxious of embarrassing their own duty by so trumpery an additional matter as the income derived from Lady Laura's forty thousand pounds.

But things were in a terrible confusion at Loughlinter. Rents were paid as heretofore on receipts given by Robert Kennedy's agent; but the agent could only pay the money to Robert Kennedy's credit at his bank. Robert Kennedy's cheques would no doubt have drawn the money out again;—but it was almost impossible to induce Robert Kennedy to sign a cheque. Even in bed he inquired daily about his money, and knew accurately the sum lying at his banker's; but he could be persuaded to disgorge nothing. He postponed from day to day the signing of certain cheques that were brought to him, and alleged very freely that an attempt was being made to rob him. During all his life he had been very generous in subscribing to public charities; but now he stopped all his subscriptions. The cousin had to provide even for the payment of wages, and things went very badly at Loughlinter. Then there arose the question whether legal steps should be taken for placing the management of the estate in other hands, on the ground of the owner's insanity. But the wretched old mother begged that this might not be done;—and Dr. Macnuthrie, from Callender, was of opinion that no steps should be taken at present. Mr. Kennedy

was very ill,—very ill indeed; would take no nourishment, and seemed to be sinking under the pressure of his misfortunes. Any steps such as those suggested would probably send their friend out of the world at once.

In fact, Robert Kennedy was dying;—and in the first week of May, when the beauty of the spring was beginning to show itself on the braes of Loughlinter, he did die. The old woman, his mother, was seated by his bedside, and into her ears he murmured his last wailing complaint. "If she had the fear of God before her eyes she would come back to me." "Let us pray that He may soften her heart," said the old lady. "Eh, mother;—nothing can soften the heart Satan has hardened, till it be hard as the nether millstone." And in that faith he died, believing as he had ever believed, that the spirit of evil was stronger than the spirit of good.

For some time past there had been perturbation in the mind of that cousin, and of all other Kennedys of that ilk, as to the nature of the will of the head of the family. It was feared lest he should have been generous to the wife who was believed by them all to have been so wicked and treacherous to her husband;—and so it was found to be when the will was read. During the last few months no one near him had dared to speak to him of his will, for it had been known that his condition of mind rendered him unfit to alter it; nor had he ever alluded to it himself. As a matter of course there had been a settlement, and it was supposed that Lady Laura's own money would revert to her; but when it was found that in addition to this the Loughlinter estate became hers for life, in the event of Mr.

Kennedy dying without a child, there was great consternation among the Kennedys generally. There were but two or three of them concerned, and for those there was money enough; but it seemed to them now that the bad wife, who had utterly refused to acclimatise herself to the soil to which she had been transplanted, was to be rewarded for her wicked stubbornness. Lady Laura would become mistress of her own fortune and of all Loughlinter, and would be once more a free woman, with all the power that wealth and fashion can give. Alas, alas! it was too late now for the taking of any steps to sever her from her rich inheritance! "And the false harlot will come and play havoc here, in my son's mansion," said the old woman, with extremest bitterness.

The tidings were conveyed to Lady Laura through her lawyer, but did not reach her in full till some eight or ten days after the news of her husband's death. The telegram announcing that event had come to her at her father's house in Portman Square, on the day after that on which Phineas had been arrested, and the Earl had of course known that his great longing for the recovery of his wife's fortune had been now realised. To him there was no sorrow in the news. He had only known Robert Kennedy as one who had been thoroughly disagreeable to himself, and who had persecuted his daughter throughout their married life. There had come no happiness,—not even prosperity,—through the marriage. His daughter had been forced to leave the man's house,—and had been forced also to leave her money behind her. Then she had been driven abroad, fearing persecution, and had only dared to return when the man's madness became so notorious

as to annul his power of annoying her. Now by his death, a portion of the injury which he had inflicted on the great family of Standish would be remedied. The money would come back,—together with the stipulated jointure,—and there could no longer be any question of return. The news delighted the old lord, —and he was almost angry with his daughter because she also would not confess her delight.

"Oh, papa, he was my husband."

"Yes, yes, no doubt. I was always against it, you will remember."

"Pray do not talk in that way now, papa. I know that I was not to him what I should have been."

"You used to say it was all his fault."

"We will not talk of it now, papa. He is gone, and I remember his past goodness to me."

She clothed herself in the deepest of mourning, and made herself a thing of sorrow by the sacrificial uncouthness of her garments. And she tried to think of him;—to think of him, and not to think of Phineas Finn. She remembered with real sorrow the words she had spoken to her sister-in-law, in which she had declared, while still the wife of another man, that she would willingly marry Phineas at the foot even of the gallows if she were free. She was free now; but she did not repeat her assertion. It was impossible not to think of Phineas in his present strait, but she abstained from speaking of him as far as she could, and for the present never alluded to her former purpose of visiting him in his prison.

From day to day, for the first few days of her widowhood, she heard what was going on. The evidence

against him became stronger and stronger, whereas the other man, Yosef Mealyus, had been already liberated. There were still many who felt sure that Mealyus had been the murderer, among whom were all those who had been ranked among the staunch friends of our hero. The Chilterns so believed, and Lady Laura; the Duchess so believed, and Madame Goesler. Mr. Low felt sure of it, and Mr. Monk and Lord Cantrip; and nobody was more sure than Mrs. Bunce. There were many who professed that they doubted; men such as Barrington Erle, Laurence Fitzgibbon, the two Dukes, —though the younger Duke never expressed such doubt at home,—and Mr. Gresham himself. Indeed, the feeling of Parliament in general was one of great doubt. Mr. Daubeny never expressed an opinion one way or the other, feeling that the fate of two second-class liberals could not be matter of concern to him;—but Sir Orlando Drought, and Mr. Roby, and Mr. Boffin, were as eager as though they had not been conservatives, and were full of doubt. Surely, if Phineas Finn were not the murderer, he had been more ill-used by fate than had been any man since fate first began to be unjust. But there was also a very strong party by whom no doubt whatever was entertained as to his guilt,—at the head of which, as in duty bound, was the poor widow, Mrs. Bonteen. She had no doubt as to the hand by which her husband had fallen, and clamoured loudly for the vengeance of the law. All the world, she said, knew how bitter against her husband had been this wretch, whose villainy had been exposed by her dear, gracious lord; and now the evidence against him was, to her thinking, complete. She was

supported strongly by Lady Eustace, who, much as she wished not to be the wife of the Bohemian Jew, thought even that preferable to being known as the widow of a murderer who had been hung. Mr. Rattler, with one or two others in the House, was certain of Finn's guilt. The People's Banner, though it prefaced each one of its daily paragraphs on the subject with a statement as to the manifest duty of an influential newspaper to abstain from the expression of any opinion on such a subject till the question had been decided by a jury, nevertheless from day to day recapitulated the evidence against the member for Tankerville, and showed how strong were the motives which had existed for such a deed. But among those who were sure of Finn's guilt, there was no one more sure than Lord Fawn, who had seen the coat and the height of the man,—and the step. He declared among his intimate friends that of course he could not swear to the person. He could not venture, when upon his oath, to give an opinion. But the man who had passed him at so quick a pace had been half a foot higher than Mealyus;—of that there could be no doubt. Nor could there be any doubt as to the grey coat. Of course there might be other men with grey coats besides Mr. Phineas Finn,—and other men half a foot taller than Yosef Mealyus. And there might be other men with that peculiarly energetic step. And the man who hurried by him might not have been the man who murdered Mr. Bonteen. Of all that Lord Fawn could say nothing. But what he did say,—of that he was sure. And all those who knew him were well aware that in his own mind he was convinced of the guilt of Phineas Finn. And there was another man equally convinced. Mr. Maule, senior, remembered

well the manner in which Madame Goesler spoke of Phineas Finn in reference to the murder, and was quite sure that Phineas was the murderer.

For a couple of days Lord Chiltern was constantly with the poor prisoner, but after that he was obliged to return to Harrington Hall. This he did a day after the news arrived of the death of his brother-in-law. Both he and Lady Chiltern had promised to return home, having left Adelaide Palliser alone in the house, and already they had overstayed their time. "Of course I will remain with you," Lady Chiltern had said to her sister-in-law; but the widow had preferred to be left alone. For these first few days,—when she must make pretence of sorrow because her husband had died; and had such real cause for sorrow in the miserable condition of the man she loved,—she preferred to be alone. Who could sympathise with her now, or with whom could she speak of her grief? Her father was talking to her always of her money;—but from him she could endure it. She was used to him, and could remember when he spoke to her of her forty thousand pounds, and of her twelve hundred a year of jointure, that it had not always been with him like that. As yet nothing had been heard of the will, and the Earl did not in the least anticipate any further accession of wealth from the estate of the man whom they had all hated. But his daughter would now be a rich woman; and was yet young, and there might still be splendour. "I suppose you won't care to buy land," he said.

"Oh, papa, do not talk of buying anything yet."

"But, my dear Laura, you must put your money into something. You can get very nearly five per cent. from Indian stock."

"Not yet, papa," she said. But he proceeded to explain to her how very important an affair money is, and that persons who have got money cannot be excused for not considering what they had better do with it. No doubt she could get four per cent. on her money by buying up certain existing mortgages on the Saulsby property,—which would no doubt be very convenient if, hereafter, the money should go to her brother's child. "Not yet, papa," she said again, having, however, already made up her mind that her money should have a different destination.

She could not interest her father at all in the fate of Phineas Finn. When the story of the murder had first been told to him, he had been amazed,—and, no doubt, somewhat gratified, as we all are, at tragic occurrences which do not concern ourselves. But he could not be made to tremble for the fate of Phineas Finn. And yet he had known the man during the last few years most intimately, and had had much in common with him. He had trusted Phineas in respect to his son, and had trusted him also in respect to his daughter. Phineas had been his guest at Dresden; and, on his return to London, had been the first friend he had seen, with the exception of his lawyer. And yet he could hardly be induced to express the slightest interest as to the fate of this friend who was to be tried for murder. "Oh; he 's committed, is he? I think I remember that Protheroe once told me that in thirty-nine cases out of forty, men committed for serious offences had been guilty of them." The Protheroe here spoken of as an authority in criminal matters was at present Lord Weazeling, the Lord Chancellor.

"But Mr. Finn has not been guilty, papa."

"There is always the one chance out of forty. But, as I was saying, if you like to take up the Saulsby mortgages, Mr. Forster can't be told too soon."

"Papa, I shall do nothing of the kind," said Lady Laura. And then she rose and walked out of the room.

At the end of ten days from the death of Mr. Kennedy, there came the tidings of the will. Lady Laura had written to Mrs. Kennedy a letter which had taken her much time in composition, expressing her deep sorrow, and condoling with the old woman. And the old woman had answered. "Madam, I am too old now to express either grief or anger. My dear son's death, caused by domestic wrong, has robbed me of any remaining comfort which the undeserved sorrows of his latter years had not already dispelled. Your obedient servant, Sarah Kennedy." From which it may be inferred that she had also taken considerable trouble in the composition of her letter. Other communications between Loughlinter and Portman Square there were none, but there came through the lawyers a statement of Mr. Kennedy's will, as far as the interests of Lady Laura were concerned. This reached Mr. Forster first, and he brought it personally to Portman Square. He asked for Lady Laura, and saw her alone. "He has bequeathed to you the use of Loughlinter for your life, Lady Laura."

"To me!"

"Yes, Lady Laura. The will is dated in the first year of his marriage, and has not been altered since."

"What can I do with Loughlinter? I will give it back to them." Then Mr. Forster explained that the legacy referred not only to the house and immediate grounds,—but to the whole estate known as the do-

main of Loughlinter. There could be no reason why she should give it up, but very many why she should not do so. Circumstanced as Mr. Kennedy had been, with no one nearer to him than a first cousin, with a property purchased with money saved by his father,—a property to which no cousin could by inheritance have any claim,—he could not have done better with it than to leave it to his widow in fault of any issue of his own. Then the lawyer explained that were she to give it up, the world would of course say that she had done so from a feeling of her own unworthiness. "Why should I feel myself to be unworthy?" she asked. The lawyer smiled, and told her that of course she would retain Loughlinter.

Then, at her request, he was taken to the Earl's room, and there repeated the good news. Lady Laura preferred not to hear her father's first exultations. But while this was being done she also exulted. Might it not still be possible that there should be before her a happy evening to her days; and that she might stand once more beside the falls of Linter, contented, hopeful, nay, almost glorious, with her hand in his to whom she had once refused her own on that very spot?

CHAPTER XXVI.

"NONE BUT THE BRAVE DESERVE THE FAIR."

THOUGH Mr. Robert Kennedy was lying dead at Loughlinter, and though Phineas Finn, a member of Parliament, was in prison, accused of murdering another member of Parliament, still the world went on with its old ways, down in the neighbourhood of Harrington Hall and Spoon Hall as at other places. The hunting with the Brake hounds was now over for the season,—had indeed been brought to an auspicious end three weeks since,—and such gentlemen as Thomas Spooner had time on their hands to look about their other concerns. When a man hunts five days a week, regardless of distances, and devotes a due proportion of his energies to the necessary circumstances of hunting, the preservation of foxes, the maintenance of good humour with the farmers, the proper compensation for poultry really killed by four-legged favourites, the growth and arrangement of coverts, the lying in of vixens, and the subsequent guardianship of nurseries, the persecution of enemies, and the warm protection of friends,—when he follows the sport, accomplishing all the concomitant duties of a true sportsman, he has not much time left for anything. Such a one as Mr. Spooner of Spoon Hall finds that his off day is occupied from breakfast to dinner with grooms, keepers, old women with turkeys' heads, and gentlemen in velveteens with information about wires and unknown earths. His letters fall naturally to the Sunday afternoon, and

are hardly written before sleep overpowers him. Many a large fortune has been made with less of true devotion to the work than is given to hunting by so genuine a sportsman as Mr. Spooner.

Our friend had some inkling of this himself, and felt that many of the less important affairs of his life were neglected because he was so true to the one great object of his existence. He had wisely endeavoured to prevent wrack and ruin among the affairs of Spoon Hall,—and had thoroughly succeeded by joining his cousin Ned with himself in the administration of his estate,—but there were things which Ned with all his zeal and all his cleverness could not do for him. He was conscious that had he been as remiss in the matter of hunting as that hard-riding but otherwise idle young scamp, Gerard Maule, he might have succeeded much better than he had hitherto done with Adelaide Palliser. "Hanging about and philandering, that 's what they want," he said to his cousin Ned.

"I suppose it is," said Ned. "I was fond of a girl once myself, and I hung about a good deal. But we had n't sixpence between us."

"That was Polly Maxwell. I remember. You behaved very badly then."

"Very badly, Tom; about as bad as a man could behave,—and she was as bad. I loved her with all my heart, and I told her so. And she told me the same. There never was anything worse. We had just nothing between us, and nobody to give us anything."

"It does n't pay; does it, Ned, that kind of thing?"

"It does n't pay at all. I would n't give her up,—nor she me. She was about as pretty a girl as I remember to have seen."

"I suppose you were a decent-looking fellow in those days yourself. They say so, but I never quite believed it."

"There was n't much in that," said Ned. "Girls don't want a man to be good-looking, but that he should speak up and not be afraid of them. There were lots of fellows came after her. You remember Blinks, of the Carabineers. He was full of money, and he asked her three times. She is an old maid to this day, and is living as companion to some crusty crotchetty countess."

"I think you did behave badly, Ned. Why did n't you set her free?"

"Of course, I behaved badly. And why did n't she set me free, if you come to that? I might have found a female Blinks of my own,—only for her. I wonder whether it will come against us when we die, and whether we shall be brought up together to receive punishment."

"Not if you repent, I suppose," said Tom Spooner, very seriously.

"I sometimes ask myself whether she has repented. I made her swear that she 'd never give me up. She might have broken her word a score of times, and I wish she had."

"I think she was a fool, Ned."

"Of course she was a fool. She knows that now, I dare say. And perhaps she has repented. Do you mean to try it again with that girl at Harrington Hall?"

Mr. Thomas Spooner did mean to try it again with the girl at Harrington Hall. He had never quite trusted the note which he had got from his friend Chiltern, and had made up his mind that, to say the least

of it, there had been very little friendship shown in the letter. Had Chiltern meant to have stood to him "like a brick," as he ought to have stood by his right-hand man in the Brake country, at any rate a fair chance might have been given him. "Where the devil would he be in such a country as this without me,"—Tom had said to his cousin,—"not knowing a soul, and with all the shooting men against him? I might have had the hounds myself,—and might have 'em now if I cared to take them. It 's not standing by a fellow as he ought to do. He writes to me, by George, just as he might do to some fellow who never had a fox about his place."

"I suppose he did n't put the two things together," said Ned Spooner.

"I hate a fellow that can't put two things together. If I stand to you you 've a right to stand to me. That 's what you mean by putting two things together. I mean to have another shy at her. She has quarrelled with that fellow Maule altogether. I 've learned that from the gardener's girl at Harrington."

Yes,—he would make another attempt. All history, all romance, all poetry, and all prose, taught him that perseverance in love was generally crowned with success,—that true love rarely was crowned with success except by perseverance. Such a simple little tale of boy's passion as that told him by his cousin had no attraction for him. A wife would hardly be worth having, and worth keeping, so won. And all proverbs were on his side. "None but the brave deserve the fair," said his cousin. "I shall stick to it," said Tom Spooner. "Labor omnia vincit," said his cousin. But what should be his next step? Gerard Maule had been

sent away with a flea in his ear,—so, at least, Mr. Spooner asserted, and expressed an undoubting opinion that this imperative dismissal had come from the fact that Gerard Maule, when "put through his facings" about income was not able to "show the money." "She 's not one of your Polly Maxwells, Ned." Ned said that he supposed she was not one of that sort. "Heaven knows I could n't show the money," said Ned, "but that did n't make her any wiser." Then Tom gave it as his opinion that Miss Palliser was one of those young women who won't go anywhere without having everything about them. "She could have her own carriage with me, and her own horses, and her own maid, and everything."

"Her own way into the bargain," said Ned. Whereupon Tom Spooner winked, and suggested that that might be as things turned out after the marriage. He was quite willing to run his chance for that.

But how was he to get at her to prosecute his suit? As to writing to her direct,—he did n't much believe in that. "It looks as though one were afraid of her, you know;—which I ain't the least. I stood up to her before, and I was n't a bit more nervous than I am at this moment. Were you nervous in that affair with Miss Maxwell?"

"Ah;—it 's a long time ago. There was n't much nervousness there."

"A sort of milkmaid affair?"

"Just that."

"That is different, you know. I 'll tell you what I 'll do. I 'll just drive slap over to Harrington and chance it. I 'll take the two bays in the phaeton. Who 's afraid?"

"There 's nothing to be afraid of," said Ned.

"Old Chiltern is such a d——d cantankerous fellow, and perhaps Lady C. may say that I ought n't to have taken advantage of her absence. But what 's the odds? If she takes me there 'll be an end of it. If she don't, they can't eat me."

"The only thing is whether they 'll let you in."

"I 'll try, at any rate," said Tom, "and you shall go over with me. You won't mind trotting about the grounds while I 'm carrying on the war inside? I 'll take the two bays, and Dick Farren behind, and I don't think there 's a prettier got-up trap in the county. We 'll go to-morrow."

And on the morrow they did start, having heard on that very morning of the arrest of Phineas Finn. "By George, don't it feel odd," said Tom just as they started, —"a fellow that we used to know down here, having him out hunting and all that, and now he 's—a murderer! Is n't it a coincidence?"

"It startles one," said Ned.

"That 's what I mean. It 's such a strange thing that it should be the man we know ourselves. These things always are happening to me. Do you remember when poor Fred Fellows got his bad fall and died the next year? You were n't here then."

"I 've heard you speak of it."

"I was in the very same field, and should have been the man to pick him up, only the hounds had just turned to the left. It 's very odd that these coincidences always are happening to some men and never do happen to others. It makes one feel that he 's marked out, you know."

"I hope you 'll be marked out by victory to-day."

"Well;—yes. That 's more important just now than Mr. Bonteen's murder. Do you know, I wish you 'd drive. These horses are pulling, and I don't want to be all in a flurry when I get to Harrington."

Now it was a fact very well known to all concerned with Spoon Hall, that there was nothing as to which the squire was so jealous as the driving of his own horses. He would never trust the reins to a friend, and even Ned had hardly ever been allowed the honour of the whip when sitting with his cousin. "I 'm apt to get red in the face when I 'm overheated," said Tom, as he made himself comfortable and easy in the left-hand seat.

There were not many more words spoken during the journey. The lover was probably justified in feeling some trepidation. He had been quite correct in suggesting that the matter between him and Miss Palliser bore no resemblance at all to that old affair between his cousin Ned and Polly Maxwell. There had been as little trepidation as money in that case,—simply love and kisses, parting, despair, and a broken heart. Here things were more august. There was plenty of money, and, let affairs go as they might, there would be no broken heart. But that perseverance in love of which Mr. Spooner intended to make himself so bright an example, does require some courage. The Adelaide Pallisers of the world have a way of making themselves uncommonly unpleasant to a man when they refuse him for the third or fourth time. They allow themselves sometimes to express a contempt which is almost akin to disgust, and to speak to a lover as though he were no better than a footman. And then the lover is bound to bear it all, and when he has borne it, finds

it so very difficult to get out of the room. Mr. Spooner had some idea of all this as his cousin drove him up to the door, at what he then thought a very fast pace. "D—— it all," he said, "you need n't have brought them up so confoundedly hot." But it was not of the horses that he was really thinking, but of the colour of his own nose. There was something working within him which had flurried him, in spite of the tranquillity of his idle seat.

Not the less did he spring out of the phaeton with a quite youthful jump. It was well that every one about Harrington Hall should know how alert he was on his legs; a little weatherbeaten about the face he might be; but he could get in and out of his saddle as quickly as Gerard Maule even yet; and for a short distance would run Gerard Maule for a ten-pound note. He dashed briskly up to the door, and rang the bell as though he feared neither Adelaide nor Lord Chiltern any more than he did his own servants at Spoon Hall. "Was Miss Palliser at home?" The maid-servant who opened the door told him that Miss Palliser was at home with a celerity which he certainly had not expected. The male members of the establishment were probably disporting themselves in the absence of their master and mistress, and Adelaide Palliser was thus left to the insufficient guardianship of young women who were altogether without discretion. "Yes, sir; Miss Palliser is at home." So said the indiscreet female, and Mr. Spooner was for the moment confounded by his own success. He had hardly told himself what reception he had expected, or whether, in the event of the servant informing him at the front door that the young lady was not at home he would make any further

immediate effort to prolong the siege so as to force an entry; but now, when he had carried the very fortress by surprise, his heart almost misgave him. He certainly had not thought, when he descended from his chariot like a young Bacchus in quest of his Ariadne, that he should so soon be enabled to repeat the tale of his love. But there he was, confronted with Ariadne before he had had a moment to shake his god-like locks or arrange the divinity of his thoughts. "Mr. Spooner," said the maid, opening the door.

"Oh dear!" exclaimed Ariadne, feeling the vainness of her wish to fly from the god. "You know, Mary, that Lady Chiltern is up in London."

"But he did n't ask for Lady Chiltern, miss." Then there was a pause, during which the maid-servant managed to shut the door and to escape.

"Lord Chiltern is up in London," said Miss Palliser, rising from her chair, "and Lady Chiltern is with him. They will be at home, I think, to-morrow, but I am not quite sure." She looked at him rather as Diana might have looked at poor Orion than as any Ariadne at any Bacchus; and for a moment Mr. Spooner felt that the pale chillness of the moon was entering in upon his very heart and freezing the blood in his veins.

"Miss Palliser——" he began.

But Adelaide was for the moment an unmitigated Diana. "Mr. Spooner," she said, "I cannot for an instant suppose that you wish to say anything to me."

"But I do," said he, laying his hand upon his heart.

"Then I must declare that—that—that you ought not to. And I hope you won't. Lady Chiltern is not in the house, and I think that—that you ought to go away. I do, indeed."

But Mr. Spooner, though the interview had been commenced with unexpected and almost painful suddenness, was too much a man to be driven off by the first angry word. He remembered that this Diana was but mortal; and he remembered, too, that though he had entered in upon her privacy, he had done so in a manner recognised by the world as lawful. There was no reason why he should allow himself to be congealed, —or even banished out of the grotto of the nymph,— without speaking a word on his own behalf. Were he to fly now, he must fly forever; whereas, if he fought now,—fought well, even though not successfully at the moment,—he might fight again. While Miss Palliser was scowling at him he resolved upon fighting. "Miss Palliser," he said, "I did not come to see Lady Chiltern; I came to see you. And now that I have been happy enough to find you, I hope you will listen to me for a minute. I shan't do you any harm."

"I 'm not afraid of any harm, but I cannot think that you have anything to say that can do anybody any good." She sat down, however, and so far yielded. "Of course I cannot make you go away, Mr. Spooner; but I should have thought, when I asked you——"

Mr. Spooner also seated himself, and uttered a sigh. Making love to a sweet, soft, blushing, willing, though silent girl is a pleasant employment; but the task of declaring love to a stony-hearted, obdurate, ill-conditioned Diana is very disagreeable for any gentleman. And it is the more so when the gentleman really loves,—or thinks that he loves,—his Diana. Mr. Spooner did believe himself to be verily in love. Having sighed, he began: "Miss Palliser, this opportunity of declaring to you the state of my heart is too

valuable to allow me to give it up without—without using it."

"It can't be of any use."

"Oh, Miss Palliser,—if you knew my feelings!"

"But I know my own."

"They may change, Miss Palliser."

"No, they can't."

"Don't say that, Miss Palliser."

"But I do say it. I say it over and over again. I don't know what any gentleman can gain by persecuting a lady. You ought n't to have been shown up here at all."

Mr. Spooner knew well that women have been won even at the tenth time of asking, and this with him was only the third. "I think if you knew my heart——" he commenced.

"I don't want to know your heart."

"You might listen to a man, at any rate."

"I don't want to listen. It can't do any good. I only want you to leave me alone, and go away."

"I don't know what you take me for," said Mr. Spooner, beginning to wax angry.

"I have n't taken you for anything at all. This is very disagreeable and very foolish. A lady has a right to know her own mind, and she has a right not to be persecuted." She would have referred to Lord Chiltern's letter had not all the hopes of her heart been so terribly crushed since that letter had been written. In it he had openly declared that she was already engaged to be married to Mr. Maule, thinking that he would thus put an end to Mr. Spooner's little adventure. But since the writing of Lord Chiltern's letter that unfortunate reference had been made to Boulogne, and every

particle of her happiness had been destroyed. She was a miserable, blighted young woman, who had quarrelled irretrievably with her lover, feeling greatly angry with herself because she had made the quarrel, and yet conscious that her own self-respect had demanded the quarrel. She was full of regret, declaring to herself from morning to night that in spite of all his manifest wickedness in having talked of Boulogne, she never could care at all for any other man. And now there was this aggravation to her misery,—this horrid suitor, who disgraced her by making those around her suppose it to be possible that she should ever accept him; who had probably heard of her quarrel, and had been mean enough to suppose that therefore there might be a chance for himself! She did despise him, and wanted him to understand that she despised him.

"I believe I am in a condition to offer my hand and fortune to any young lady without impropriety," said Mr. Spooner.

"I don't know anything about your condition."

"But I will tell you everything."

"I don't want to know anything about it."

"I have an estate of——"

"I don't want to know about your estate. I won't hear about your estate. It can be nothing to me."

"It is generally considered to be a matter of some importance."

"It is of no importance to me, at all, Mr. Spooner; and I won't hear anything about it. If all the parish belonged to you, it would not make any difference."

"All the parish does belong to me, and nearly all the next," replied Mr. Spooner, with great dignity.

"Then you 'd better find some lady who would like

to have two parishes. They have n't any weight with me at all." At that moment she told herself how much she would prefer even Bou——logne, to Mr. Spooner's two parishes.

"What is it that you find so wrong about me?" asked the unhappy suitor.

Adelaide looked at him, and longed to tell him that his nose was red. And, though she would not quite do that, she could not bring herself to spare him. What right had he to come to her,—a nasty, red-nosed old man, who knew nothing about anything but foxes and horses,—to her, who had never given him the encouragement of a single smile? She could not allude to his nose, but in regard to his other defects she would not spare him. "Our tastes are not the same, Mr. Spooner."

"You are very fond of hunting."

"And our ages are not the same."

"I always thought that there should be a difference of age," said Mr. Spooner, becoming very red.

"And,—and,—and,—it 's altogether quite preposterous. I don't believe that you can really think it yourself."

"But I do."

"Then you must unthink it. And, indeed, Mr. Spooner, since you drive me to say so,—I consider it to be very unmanly of you, after what Lord Chiltern told you in his letter."

"But I believe that is all over."

Then her anger flashed up very high. "And if you do believe it, what a mean man you must be to come to me when you must know how miserable I am, and to think that I should be driven to accept you after

losing him! You never could have been anything to me. If you wanted to get married at all you should have done it before I was born." This was hard upon the man, as at that time he could not have been much more than twenty. "But you don't know anything of the difference in people if you think that any girl would look at you, after having been——loved by Mr. Maule. Now, as you do not seem inclined to go away, I shall leave you." So saying, she walked off with stately step, out of the room, leaving the door open behind her to facilitate her escape.

She had certainly been very rude to him, and had treated him very badly. Of that he was sure. He had conferred upon her what is commonly called the highest compliment which a gentleman can pay to a lady, and she had insulted him;—had doubly insulted him. She had referred to his age, greatly exaggerating his misfortune in that respect; and she had compared him to that poor beggar, Maule, in language most offensive. When she left him he put his hand beneath his waistcoat, and turned with an air almost majestic towards the window. But in an instant he remembered that there was nobody there to see how he bore his punishment, and he sank down into human nature. "Damnation!" he said, as he put his hands into his trousers pockets.

Slowly he made his way down into the hall, and slowly he opened for himself the front door, and escaped from the house on to the gravel drive. There he found his Cousin Ned still seated in the phaeton, and slowly driving round the circle in front of the hall door. The squire succeeded in gaining such command over his own gait and countenance that his cousin

divined nothing of the truth as he clambered up into his seat. But he soon showed his temper. "What the devil have you got the reins in this way for?"

"The reins are all right," said Ned.

"No they ain't—they 're all wrong." And then he drove down the avenue to Spoon Hall as quickly as he could make the horses trot.

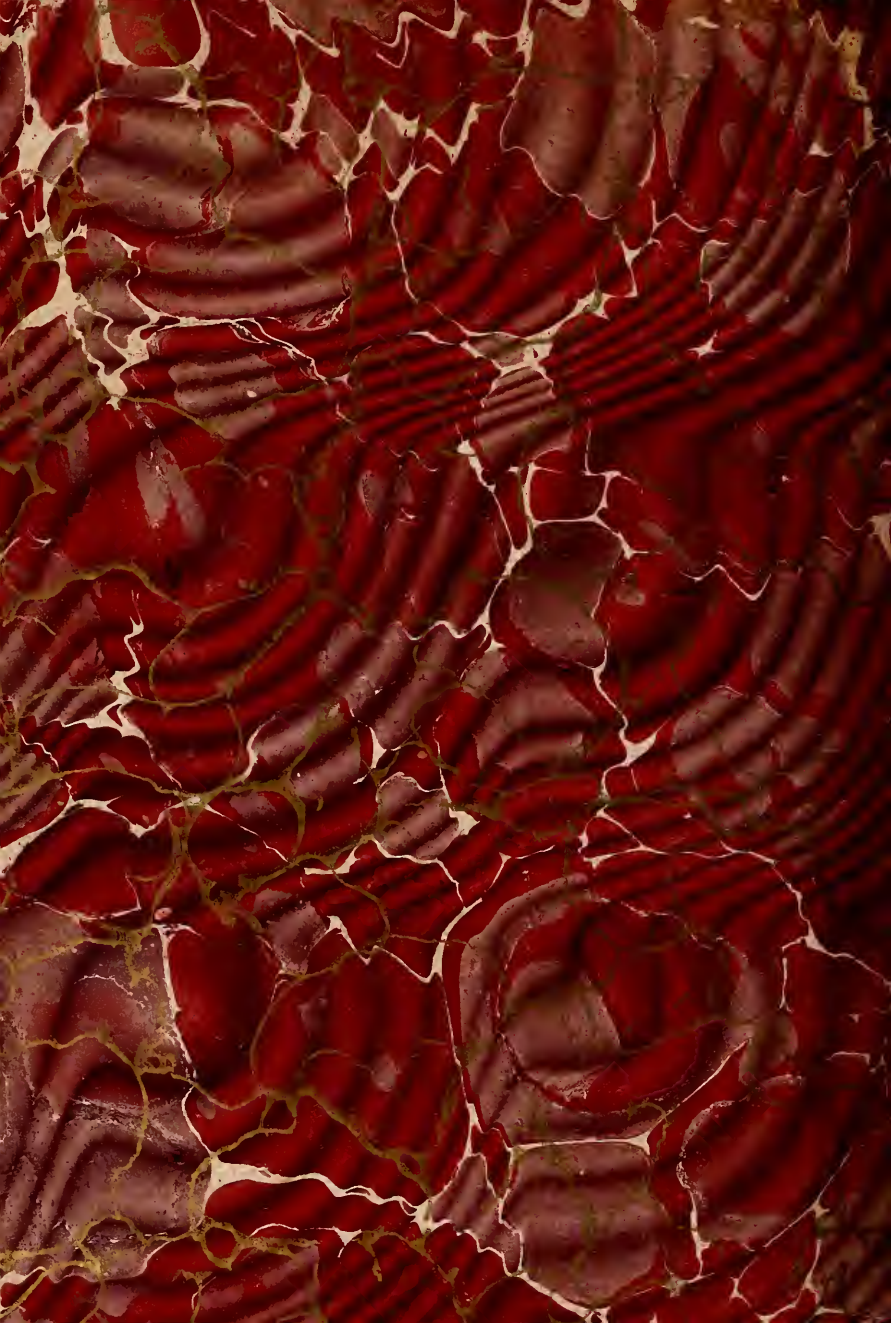
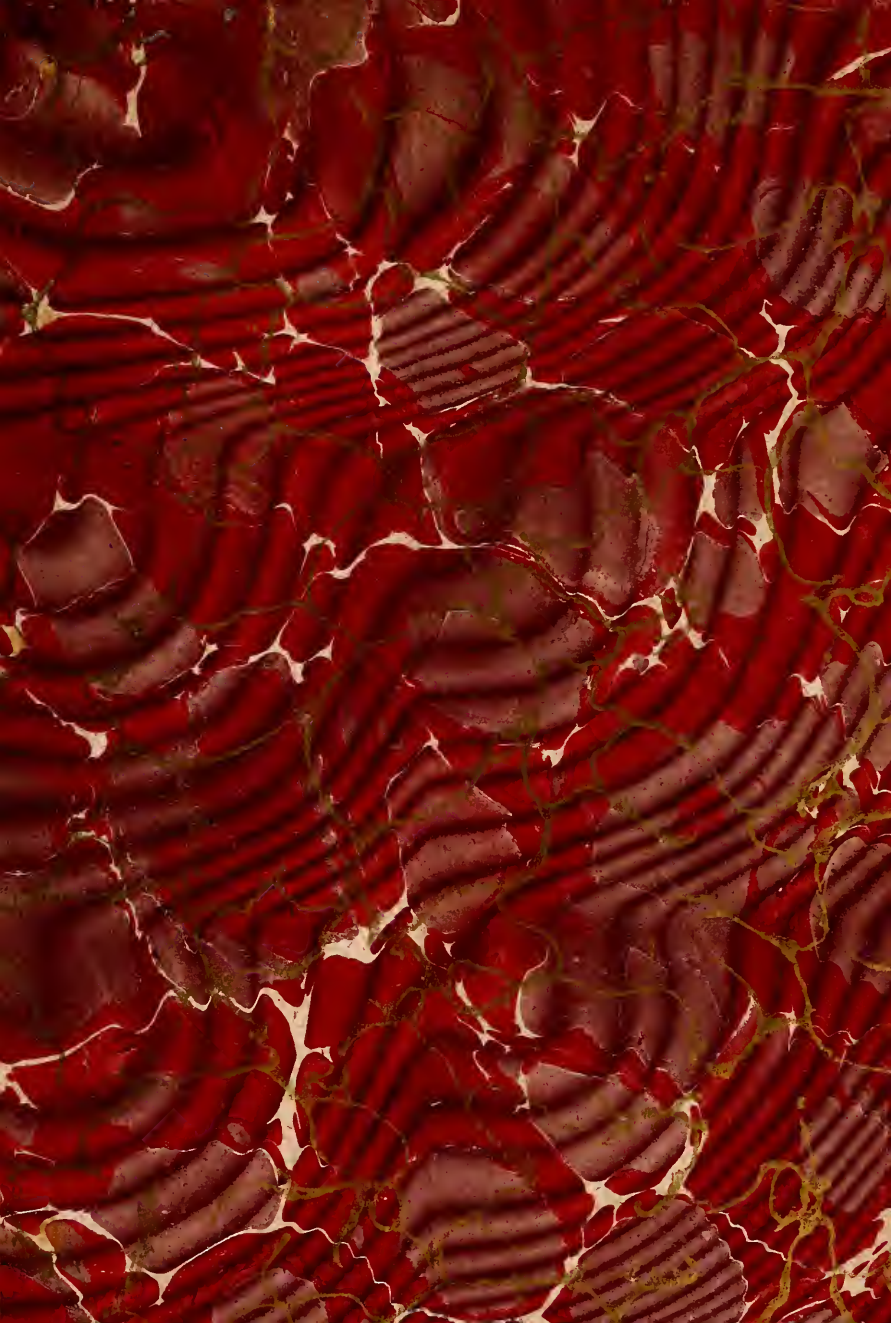
"Did you see her?" said Ned, as soon as they were beyond the gates.

"See your grandmother."

"Do you mean to say that I 'm not to ask?"

"There 's nothing I hate so much as a fellow that 's always asking questions," said Tom Spooner. "There are some men so d——d thick-headed that they never know when they ought to hold their tongue."

For a minute or two Ned bore the reproof in silence, and then he spoke. "If you are unhappy, Tom, I can bear a good deal; but don't overdo it,—unless you want me to leave you."

"She 's the d——t vixen that ever had a tongue in her head," said Tom Spooner, lifting his whip and striking the poor off-horse in his agony. Then Ned forgave him.

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